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DRY LEAVES

by

Dr. Itamar Yahalom and Joellen Lapidus

Based on the True Life Stories of
Dr. Itamar Yahalom

as told to and written by Joellen Lapidus

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DRY LEAVES

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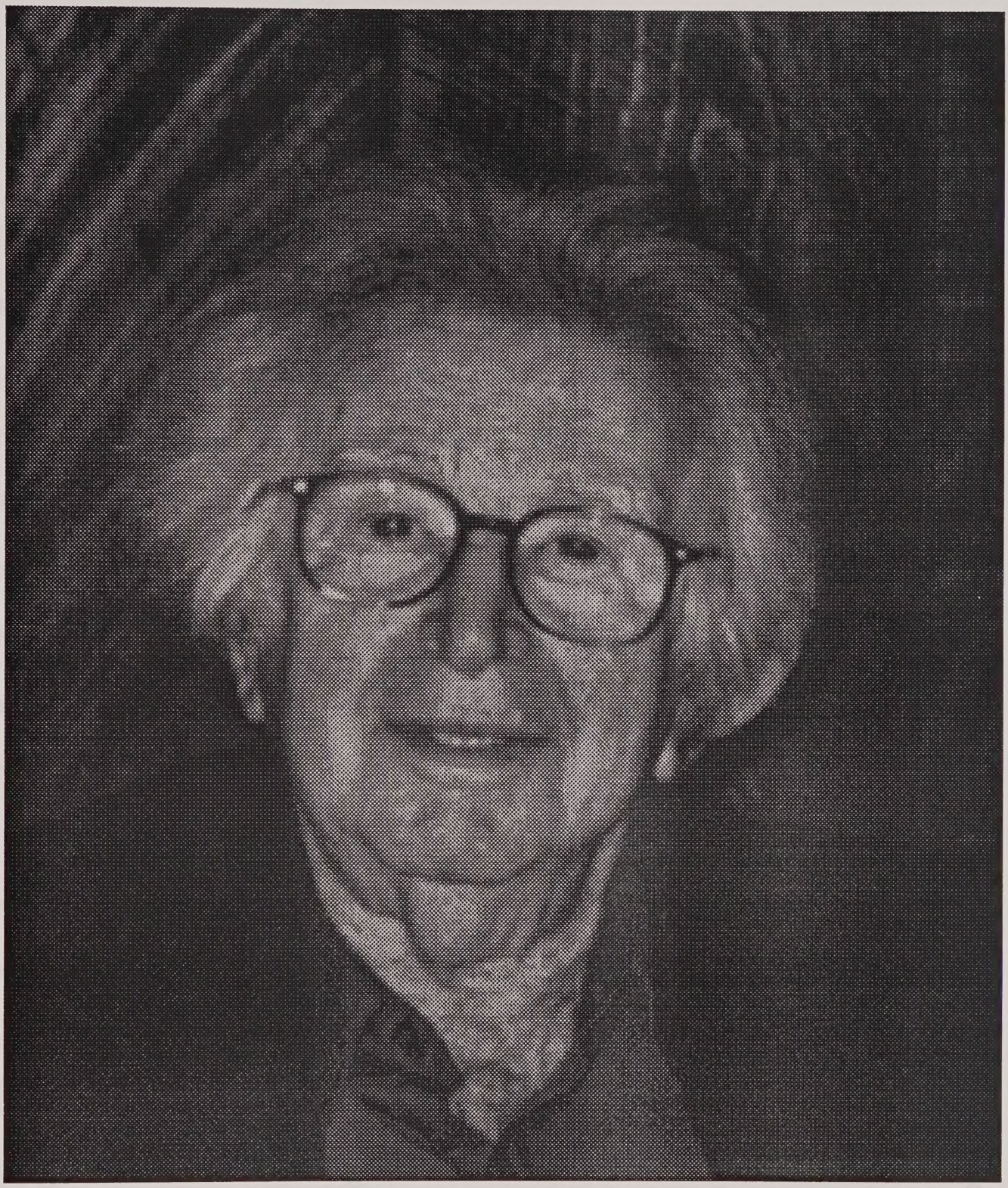

DR. ITAMAR YAHALOM
1914-2001

INTRODUCTION

Israel, circa 1951

An armed driver pulled up to Itamar's house in the soft chill of early dawn. It was too dangerous to travel across the desert alone these days to make house calls. Raised in Palestine from the age of eight after leaving one of those small towns that went back and forth between Poland and Russia, he now ran the agency that resettled refugee children after the second world war. The Central Committee called him when a psychological crisis occurred in one of the outlying desert farming communities or Kibbutzim as they were called. He wasn't a doctor or a psychologist yet but he had more education than most and a lot of experience working with dislocated, orphaned and traumatized children.

This particular evening Itamar found a boy stretched out on his cot, wasting away from starvation and dehydration. He was unwilling or unable, it was difficult to ascertain, to talk. None of his friends would talk to Itamar or even acknowledge his presence. These boys were refugees from a primitive and unusual Jewish tribe in India, full of customs unfamiliar to the European refugees who were streaming into Israel at the time. They came with nothing and held on to peculiar rituals and deeply rooted superstitions as their only possession.

The boy had no disease, no visible injury, but was definitely approaching death rapidly. When Itamar phoned a Rabbi in a nearby community, the Rabbi asked him several odd questions about the boy's nutrition and sleep habits. After a short pause he suggested Itamar turn the boy's bed in a specific direction. Immediately the boy sat up asking for some food and water. To sleep with one's head facing the door meant you were dead in his tribe. Your friends could not say your name. No one could feed you.

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Dr. Itamar Yahalom told us many wild stories about his first patients in our basement classroom one night in December of 1998. A few weeks later I asked him if I could tape record some of his stories. I was a student at the Psychoanalytic Institute he both co-founded and worked at as a Training and Supervising Analyst at the time. I expected stories about unusual patients from his work in Israel, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. After all, his life spanned almost the entire history of psychoanalysis. His analytic training was given by men who were analysands and colleagues of Dr. Sigmund Freud. He studied with Dr. Carl Jung in Switzerland, worked with Dr. Bruno Bettleheim at the Orthogenic School for Severely Disturbed Children at the University of Chicago, taught with Dr. Heinz Kohut at the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute, argued with Anna Freud about disturbed children

during the first meetings of the International Association for Child Psychoanalysis, conversed with Dr. Donald Winnicott following publication of their work in the same issue of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* and directed the Reiss Davis Child Development Center in Los Angeles. But what he wanted me to record was something else.

> *In 1933, as Adolf Hitler came to power, myself and nine other young men were sent to Hitler's Germany as the result of a convergence of interest between the Nazis, the British and a Jewish International Association. I was 19. We arrived from British ruled Palestine equipped with British diplomatic passports and 10,000 visas each, allowing Jews to leave Germany and emigrate to Palestine. According to how long each man stayed alive, he rescued ten to sixty thousand Jewish people each. To my knowledge I am the only one of the ten who survived. I am now 85. Our story has never been told. Actually I want to tell you two stories. The second is about a patient I saw for seven years who brought out the dead from the gas chambers. He survived because they thought he was deaf and mute.*

Dr. Itamar Yahalom's stories take the reader, as I myself was taken, on a journey through one of the most horrific periods in human history, not for the purpose of making an opinion or a judgment of the Holocaust, but to illuminate the resiliency and capacity of the human mind to adapt and survive all the deep tragedies of human history. We believe that this extreme episode of history reflects both known and unknown aspects of human mind, human being, human struggle and human suffering.

In Dr. Yahalom's stories, darkness is as important as illumination. He reminds us to never lose a tenacious reverence for the unknown, the vast

arena, in fact the infinite arena, of the unknowable and unpredictable in both life and the human mind. Dr. Yahalom's stories may jostle and shake up your mental faculties. For a moment, you might not know what you're hearing or thinking. But then it comes to you. It makes sense. And you have seen the world just a little bit differently.

Dr. Yahalom and I met every Friday for over two years. These sessions were all tape recorded and transcribed. Here are the two stories he wanted me to write and many of the dialogues we generated while navigating the undercurrents and riptides within his life's journey.

Joellen Lapidus,

Los Angeles, 2001

PROLOGUE

REVISITING KIBBUTZ DAHLIA

Israel, Early 1990's

A tall, slightly stooped figure, carrying a large cardboard box, met us near the gate. "You might want these," he said as he handed me a carefully preserved collection of dried flowers.

They brought back memories of my first years at Kibbutz Dahlia, when I collected one of every species of the many wild flowers that grew in and around the Kibbutz, as they might have disappeared with time.

Shmi Dan was a professor of anthropology in Germany, before Hitler, and had kept the dried flowers all these years. In the old days some Kibbutz members liked to tease him and call out, "Professor Ernst! Professor Ernst!" He would turn slowly and deliberately and meet their cruelty with a stern glare and two simple words spoken in a deep resonant voice, "Shmi Dan.", which meant, "My name is Dan." He wanted to forget Germany and the humiliation suffered when his students dragged him out of his classroom.

The full box of dried flowers also evoked a painful memory of my own childhood. One day, father came home with his head and beard shaved off on one side, apparently a favorite pastime of the Russian Cossacks in the early 1900's. When he saw the tears in my eyes, he tried to console me. "Don't feel sad, my son, God will make the hair grow again." But it affected him more than he would admit. He locked himself into his room for weeks until the hair grew back. The shaved side grew in grey, while the other side remained black. This incident was at the heart of my father's decision to leave Konskovola, Poland and take me with him to Palestine. My mother and brothers and sisters would follow to save the whole family from destruction.

I told my wife if I survived my 85th birthday I might be willing to tell these stories. Two years ago I turned 85 and I am ready. I have no reason to keep anything to myself, like a tree that drops its leaves in season.

Dried leaves... so many stories and memories, so intimately connected to my wild flowers, containing all the mystery of this life, of survival and continuity.

Dr. Itamar Yahalom
Los Angeles, 2001

DRY LEAVES

PART 1

Jerusalem, 1928

a seedling takes root

IN THE BEGINNING

Jerusalem, circa 1928

I became a soldier in the Jewish underground, the Haganah, when I turned fifteen. My parents were no longer alive, having died when I was thirteen and a half of infections that could easily be cured by today's medicines. Palestine was governed by the British and I attended a British seminary that was run by an active member of the Haganah, the secret defense organized to fight against the British. The Haganah was very strong in those days. Extremists dreamed of sabotaging and killing the British. The moderates wanted to fight only when necessary. These groups fought as bitterly against each other as against the British.

We didn't have official positions, nor were we a well organized army, but we were very secretive. We had to be. My fellow students observed that messages arrived for me. Frequently I would disappear for a few hours, sometimes for a few days. Nobody asked questions. These details form a chain leading up to my first meeting with the dean of the seminary and all the events that followed.

We were in awe of the dean. His name was Dinu and he had quite a reputation among the young students. He was one of those extraordinary professors. He ran the administration of the school with skill and fairness and was very involved with the students. We called him the "red dean", because of

rumors of an extreme socialist past somewhere in Europe.

When I met him for the first time, I owned nothing but a few clothes and a bicycle. There were two seminaries in Jerusalem and I went to him for an interview.

"Sir, I'm enrolled in the other seminary but it's too religious. I want to study here. I know that it's harder, more difficult and ...."

He interrupted me: "How do you survive, young man?"

That's a wonderful question, I thought.

"I find little jobs with my bicycle. Sometimes I clean pests from the trees in the wealthy neighborhoods. Whatever I get is what I survive on. I have a sister and if I'm very desperate I go to her for a meal."

"Do you know what, Itamar?"

He called me by my first name immediately, which was very uncommon for those times in such an official institution.

"Itamar, I will accept you into this seminary." He gave me a booklet with all the classes and sent me to the secretary to sign a lot of papers.

"How will you get here? You live at quite a distance."

"I'll move nearby. I live with a friend of my sister but I'll move and find work around here."

"You live on a very small amount of money?"

"I don't need much. I eat enough, once in a while I need something for my bicycle. I do most of the repairs myself. It's my property."

"You seem healthy, very strong."

"I don't starve sir. Sometimes I don't have much but there are always oranges that I can buy for a few pennies." This was the beginning.

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I moved into a room with four other students who all came from different countries. Five young men in one room: five beds and a few odd furnishings. We studied and played hard. We had a good comradery among us because we all were away and had nobody. I found little jobs and survived relatively well. One day I stepped into one of the two newspapers.

"I see boys in the morning who deliver newspapers. Don't you need a delivery boy?"

"Wonderful... we are looking... one left us just today. If you are ready to start tonight, it is from four...."

"At eight I have to be in the seminary." They liked that they had a student working for them. I really wasn't a student yet, but they gave me a job from four to seven in the morning.

"You need a bicycle."

"A bicycle I have!" We were all delighted.

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I studied. I delivered newspapers. And I was responsible for the defense of a highly mystical religious group, who lived within the gates of the old city and refused to defend themselves with guns. Twenty-seven members of the same sect were all butchered with knives in another city. They were a quiet, pious but eccentric community of mysticists who adhered to a very rigid way of life. It was the Haganah's ambition to protect them. At least the people would not be mercilessly slaughtered.

Since they were against having guns in a sacred place, the Haganah made an arrangement with them. If they built a secret room deep inside their sanctuary, one young man from the Haganah, provided that he would be willing to dress in their customary full outfit of black clothing and fur hat, could stay there. The Haganah even promised that the young man would grow a beard, but that wasn't possible in my case. I was still too young.

With the help of a few teenage members of the group, we secretly broke the rules. I taught the youngsters how to shoot and we hid a few small guns and boxes of ammunition in the tiny cleverly designed room built in case of an attack. There was no visible door to this room and if there were signs of danger somebody sent a message and I came and went directly into the room and prepared the guns. If there were prowlers or any kind of trouble I came out and sat near the door with the men while they studied and prayed, concealing the guns under my clothing.

This is an important beginning to my story because we all shared an

illusion that two or three youngsters with little revolvers could defend this group from violent attack. I felt protected because when I was in the room there was no visible door. I was hidden. But could I have really protected them in an attack? It was an illusion, but a lot of things were illusions.

I spent much of my free time going back and forth what seemed like an enormous distance. Years later I returned and discovered it was maybe two or three kilometers at the most. But at the age of fifteen, in an urgent situation, riding on a bicycle or traveling on foot, the distance seemed immense.

I figured out early on that the dean, Professor Dinu, was the contact person for my assignment. Most likely he knew who I was even before I joined his seminary. He knew exactly what I was doing and probably even gave the orders. There was no telephone contact. Messages came by a piece of paper with a name or word written on it that meant I had to go there.

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I have a question about the secret room you described. First you take us inside the walls of the old city. Then inside the walls of the old city you introduce us to a group of mystics. Then inside the mystical group there's a secret room, which even goes against their laws. Inside the room you place a young boy who is supposed to defend them with a few guns despite their aversion to weapons. You see how there's walls and rooms and insides and further insides and inside all of that is you. But what was going on inside of you?

You see, I felt important and powerful. I felt I could protect them, that I was their protector. Once I was there, I felt

safe. I knew that three little revolvers cannot protect us, but I also knew it didn't matter. I had two younger people who learned to shoot and I knew we would be the first three to run to the door and the others would run away. So I felt safe. I felt elated that we have such a power.

Symbolically, it's more like they're protecting you as if you're safely tucked away inside a womb, inside of their society.

I was a mystical element to them. They let the room be built, but they didn't see that it's their room. The room protects them accidentally. There's a room but it's not them.

To them it's accidental that a man lives among them who can do for them what they really want deep down inside themselves. They wanted to survive but it was against their religion to kill. When I was there I felt they feel safer.

So it's similar to how you felt on the boat coming from Russia to Palestine with your father. You felt he was lost without mother. You felt like his protector?

I had a feeling of safety through my responsibility, but also through absorbing their power of belief. They weren't worried, or maybe they were, but they didn't let it influence them. My little room was built for their sake so they wouldn't see me or the guns. But very soon I would get bored and I would leave the door open. I sat on the benches with them and read what they read. I dressed like them. They studied, I studied. They prayed, I prayed and whoever looked at me was amazed that I could read. Sometimes I intentionally read a little bit loud so they could hear. My reading was different than theirs, because my pronunciation was in modern Hebrew.

When I looked through the door I saw my father's head as he was on a Saturday, dressed in his Schtreimel. The fur hat is called a Schtreimel. It was father. I protect all the fathers. I protect all the mothers. I felt safe there. I had no worries, except to be alert, but that didn't take much.

We might say that's why your father took you, the youngest, and not the other children? He had a sense that you could be both a companion and lead and protect, without it being spoken.

Father explained it to me before we left, and on the way, that he and mother agreed, in case she and the family would not survive, at least I would be rescued. That was their sacrifice. They had reconciled that the family might not survive. It was strange and frightening to me. They both put their fate and faith

in me. I had to jump ahead and grow up. The tears were in my eyes but I refused to cry. Now I cannot cry. Leaving mother was my first lesson in psychoanalysis. I had to see myself as a separate entity. It was hard and it wasn't that hard. Inside, I had some readiness for it.

So it was almost like a ritual, a preparation, a first rite of passage, to introduce you to your inherent destiny, to step into the shoes of that destiny.

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The dean and I never spoke directly about the Haganah. We just lived regular lives. I was captain of the football team, here you call it soccer, and was always active somewhere and studied between all my activities. My few friends, especially my roommates, noticed that I received special treatment but we never talked about that either. Two of the boys had a lot of money and received care packages full of those special foods parents send children in the mail. Only one fellow was like myself, barely surviving. The thing he and I had the least of was food. The five of us shared many things but never took things that weren't ours. We organized all kinds of activities together and had a good time. We lived very well together.

Dinu used to call me in once in a while and asked how I was doing. "How do I deliver the papers in the rain at night? What do I do for a jacket?" I told him I had some khaki shorts and a kind of cover I bought at a British surplus store that sold old military equipment. I told him I had all the money I needed because I

had no expenses. He was really like a mother and father throughout all of my teenage years because he was always there in the background. I had nobody else close by even though my sisters and brothers were scattered around. Dinu and I were always in contact with each other without ever speaking about it.

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One day Dinu called me into his office.

"Itamar, I know how hard you struggle. You get up at four in the morning to deliver newspapers just to survive. We have a school in the city for eight to thirteen year old children who work. These children work ten or twelve hours a day. The board met and decided that you, who are already in your second year, with another year to go, we decided to appoint you as the principal. As the principal you will get a salary."

When he told me the amount of money I thought: What will I do with so much money?

"I have to tell the newspaper. When do I start?"

"The old principal already left. We would like you to start at the end of this week."

"I will tell them tonight, but do I have to buy clothing to be the principal? I hope not, because I don't have money to buy clothing."

"It will all be taken care of, Itamar, don't worry. Part of your job will be to

organize volunteers from the youth movement to find these children because their parents don't want them to go out in the evening after they come home. They are tired".

I was smarter then than I am today. I came up with the idea to feed them a hot meal. The children came and first thing, we fed them. Some came at seven in the evening, some came as late as ten. We created a sensible environment for them that began with a good meal. These children had nothing. Their parents had nothing.

The school was just a few rooms. A volunteer women came who cooked or brought things donated by her neighbors. We started the evening with fresh bread, hot soup and some vegetables. Most of these children wouldn't have had such a meal otherwise, and they were exhausted. They would fall asleep, even in the middle of the meal, so we tried to squeeze in, give them maybe a half an hour, maybe five or ten minutes of education before they dozed off. They really started to learn. Most of them didn't know any Hebrew and spoke whatever language was spoken at home. The majority could barely read any language. Although from different communities and even different countries, they started to feel connected to each other and to a school.

The boys I lived with congratulated me and we celebrated with a big party. The ones that got special packages from their parents each month pulled out all the good things we weren't used to eating like chocolates and dried fruit. I started to sleep through the night, a real sleep, until seven in the morning. With

a full night's sleep and all the money I now had, I felt a freedom, an exhilaration in every moment of this new life.

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I entered the seminary when I was fifteen and went all the way through until the end. We followed the British system, that is high school and college combined together. When you finished your studies, someone came all the way from London to test us in both English and the Bible. Graduation, this I remember very well, was supposed to take place somewhere in August or September. That was the end of our school year. We had to pass several major exams.

First came the Bible exam. A man came from London who was an expert on the Bible and tested each one of us separately. I don't know how it came about, but I fell in love with the Bible during my studies at the seminary and I love it just as much today as I loved it then. I studied it with a passion and idealism that overwhelmed and enchanted the man from England.

He asked odd questions that were like tricks or puzzles rather than meaningful questions: "Where is this and this sentence written in the Bible?" It wasn't a sentence at all. It was half a sentence from one paragraph and half a sentence from the beginning of another paragraph. He put it together and made it sound like a sentence. But I knew what he had done and answered all of his

questions. He was fascinated, almost mesmerized by how I was consumed with the details and the layers of meaning within the stories of the Bible.

"You know young man... you should study in Britain. I'll talk to your dean. If he approves I can get you a fellowship. All your expenses will be paid for and you can go. I've heard how you people live over here. All the money to study..." I didn't exactly know what he was offering me but I thanked him very much.

Dinu looked at me: "Is this what you really want? Are you ready to leave us and go off by yourself?"

"Professor Dinu, I'd do anything to go to London! I've never been out of Palestine, except of course before I came here. Konskovola, where I was born doesn't even exist anymore!"

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KONSKOVOLA

Konskovola was flung back and forth between Russia and Poland like a chip in a poker game. My father's father owned a blanket factory in Konskovola and became an unusually rich man by making woolen blankets for officers in the Russian army. My father inherited the huge factory and we lived well until those same Russians gave the orders to burn it down during the First World War.

The factory's unwieldy and portly steam engine survived relatively unharmed inside a small wooden building off to the side of the factory. Father

salvaged the engine and put it to work running a flour mill right out in the middle of our yard. Farmers drove their horse drawn wagons overflowing with wheat into our yard and left with sacks of flour. Those who couldn't pay gave us flour in trade. My mother in turn went to town and traded or sold the flour for chickens, books and other goods.

I loved to play in the yard. I spent hours there by myself amidst the men and their working horses. I observed how they talked and conducted business among themselves. I learned from these people and they loved to see a little boy they knew.

I roamed the yard with a large black dog that belonged to the man who shoveled coal into the belly of the great engine. The man could barely fit into the small wooden enclosure with the steam engine and by the end of the day his face and clothes were always as black as his dog and the coal used to stoke the engine. The dog's long black back hairs served as a leash and I loved to parade him around among the horses and wagons. One time I was standing between the legs of a huge brown horse cleaning its shoe with a stick. Fearing for my safety, my mother suddenly ran out of the house, pulling me out from under the legs of the horse. I said in my childish Yiddish, "Meine ferdileh..." "My horses wouldn't kick me."

The old burned out factory building stood off to one side of our large yard. It was the only part of our property that terrified me. Standing three stories high, it leaned to one side like it wanted to go somewhere. Instead, its charred beams

stubbornly held their ground like the buried legs of a skeleton at some archeological site. The factory stared out at me through windows that no longer contained even a shard of glass, with the infinitely empty calm eyes of death. I wouldn't go near there at night and stayed just as far away during the day. I had no fear of strange people or their huge horses with heavy steel shoes, but that building spooked me like an unconscious repository of vaguely remembered images of human sacrifice.

Our existence was very unstable. The mill never earned enough money for us to survive and things got worse after 1917 with the attacks from the Cossacks. Even a man like my grandfather, who had strong ties to the Czar and contracts with big generals, wasn't able to hold on to his life's work. Jews weren't allowed to own land, only rent and we all lived in areas that were like islands floating within the mainstream of the Russian/ Polish economy.

I was the youngest of nine children born to a mother who wasn't even thirty at my birth. Two already died just before me and by the time I was eight, my two oldest brothers were gone, swept up in the wave of emigration fever fueled and fanned by the International Jewish Agency. The Agency organized passage from Russia to Palestine and other safe havens. My brothers were already there. Between the financial hardships, attacks from Russian Cossacks on one side and Germans on the other, Palestine appeared as an uncharted frontier, a promise of a new beginning. My parents dreamed of going to Palestine and starting over in a new world, like I was now dreaming of going to London.

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Most children remember the Russian Cossacks very differently than I remember them. Other children might remember them like an explosion or a tornado bursting into a town. Imagine huge men dressed in fur hats and heavy red coasts trimmed in fur astride thundering horses decorated with fancy bridles and ornate saddles carrying fire held out in front of them like mediaeval knights with jousting sticks in some macabre contest. Whoever set the most houses on fire got some fabulous prize.

Some children may remember the sound of hooves or the sounds of the breaking of windows and wooden doors and screams and curses. Some may remember the smell of their homes on fire, images of their mothers and sisters being raped or a best friend or parent beheaded in front of their child eyes. They might remember their own violation or their parents' helplessness.

I remember my mother being electrically alive surrounded by a sharp sense of danger that you could almost smell. She had achieved what we might call a delicate diplomatic balance with the Cossacks and even the Germans. I would see them in our big front room, what we would call today the livingroom, drinking the best vodka. We were all hiding in the basement. When they came my father ordered us to go down the basement steps until it was over. One of my brothers or sisters would hold me on their lap and tell me to be very still and quiet. When I was old enough to walk up those same steps on my own, I would

watch her through the keyhole of the heavy basement door. Keys and keyholes were much larger then. You could see the whole room.

I wanted to look and didn't want to look. It was so overwhelmingly dangerous, but I was attracted to the tension like a magnet to steel. I was riveted to the keyhole, frozen in place by my fascination for the unfamiliar, the unknown; and the physicality of the terror and excitement that my mother could be killed at the whim of any soldier in that room.

It was as if mother was flying around the room. Sometimes there was music and the noise and shouts and flying got so loud and wild, I would get scared she might fly right out the window and never come back to us. She served them drinks. She served their favorite foods and danced with the Cossacks and the Germans, whoever was invading our little town of Konskovola. She knew how to evoke some bit of humanness with them, enough to ward off their need to cut off her head or rape her.

And that is how she saved her family from the Cossacks. I knew this was my mother. But this was a different mother than the one that buttoned my pajamas and read me stories before I went to sleep.

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My mother had other secrets. She read books by candle light after father was asleep. His strict tradition of Chassidic Judaism denied women education

but father never denied her a full supply of candles. She must have traded in town for the books and she loved to tell me about whatever she was reading. Her face was a kaleidoscope of inflections and expressions even though I had no idea what she was saying. It was a special way we had of being together. She knew I didn't understand and therefore she could say anything. Her voice, the way she dove into the stories, all made me into her most appreciative and adoring audience.

As I grew older, I understood more and more of the words she spoke to me but never the whole meaning. She talked to me about the characters in the novels she was reading, philosophy, history and sex with father. But I also remember her saying this: "I already had eight children Itamar. I carried big iron pots of water when I was pregnant with you so I would miscarry. But look at you. Here you are. You are stubborn and would not go away. You would not let go of your grip on life."

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I was eight years old when they told me: "You are going to Palestine with father." It was strange and even frightening thought, but it was presented to me calmly, in quite sensible and logical terms. I saw my parents were in full agreement. Much later I learned that if both parents are in full agreement, a child feels safer, even if the most unpleasant things happen.

We left Konskovola in 1922 and made our way to the port town of Constanza. Even though things were well organized by the Jewish International Agency, we still had to wait three weeks, not knowing when the boat would be ready to leave. From Constanza it would take 6 weeks by boat to Jerusalem, a very long trip.

I say that my separation from my family, especially my mother, was my first lesson in psychoanalysis. I had to separate myself from my mother's tears and my father's dependency on me. I was alone with him and could see he was completely lost without mother. He looked to me. He was a man with a lot of knowledge but foreign countries were strange to him. To me they were not strange because as a child everything was new to me. I was on a great big terrific adventure. My father and I were going to rescue the family. We were the pioneers.

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The International Jewish Agency gave us places to sleep and blankets. Constanza was the main exit port in our area. We woke up every morning surrounded by people arriving from different countries, speaking different languages. I was just a child but because father looked like a man who knew things, people asked him all kinds of questions including how to go to the Synagogue. He looked at me. "You have a good sense of direction, Itamar. Do

you know? I see how you look around you every day. I see how you notice the twists in the road, the rocks, the trees and the houses when we go back and forth every morning and evening from the Synagogue. Do you know?" He talked to me in Yiddish and Hebrew combined.

"Father, of course I know exactly but... I am afraid to tell them that I know... maybe I'm wrong?"

"If you feel that you know, I'll tell them that 'I know', because they won't trust a little boy."

People accepted his leadership right away and he took my hand and I whispered to him every time: "to the right father... to the left..." There were really few street signs or markers then. When we finally arrived, father said: "With the help God and your excellent sense of direction, we arrived!" I have so many memories of that kind. They gave me a feeling of being capable of great responsibility.

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So I answered Dinu, "I want to go."

"You want to go away all by yourself at the age of eighteen and a half?"

"Not that part of it really. I don't like the idea of leaving you and my friends behind, but everybody talks about London. I've always dreamed of going to London."

"Itamar, this man is serious. He can get the financing you need to bring you to the University. Most of the students board there. They come from all over the British Empire. He'll take care of everything."

"I'm ready."

"If that's what you want then I'll arrange it. You know you'll be there three or four years?"

"Yes. This is what I want."

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A very short time after I had made my decision, another man approached me, someone equivalent to a member of the Board of Directors of the small school I ran for working children. He was Italian, always friendly towards me, and everyone addressed him as Doctor. He seemed to be a physician, not a professor like Dinu.

"What do you want to do when you graduate? Are you going to stay here and make a career of being a teacher or a principal of a school at the age of eighteen and a half? You can, but you're too smart for that. You're quick with languages and have such a good knowledge of both Hebrew and English." I didn't really know English that well but to him I was an expert. "If you want to study in Italy... I know there's already difficulty in Italy... because Mussolini is in power... and there's some question about Jews... but there isn't really a

hatred of the Jews among the Italians and... If you could, what school would you like to go to? What would you really like to study?"

"I'd go to medical school if I could."

"Well that's a smart choice since you're talking to a doctor and I can easily get you in. It won't be too hard since I'm on the faculty of a medical school. We'll arrange a scholarship for your tuition and I'll have to find sponsors for your living expenses. I'll let you know on my next trip."

I signed some papers for him and a few weeks later he came to me with a big smile on his face and handed me a letter of acceptance. "It's done. You are accepted. I found two or three people to finance your trip. You will come to Italy in September."

It was almost too much for me. Here comes one guy who gives me a fellowship to study in London. Here comes another guy with a letter stating: "In September you're off to medical school in Italy". Now I didn't understand anything about money. I didn't accumulate money. I didn't save money. Most of us had very little. I lived well on my new salary. I even bought a pair of soccer shoes. That was a big deal. Only half of the team had such shoes. This man came back to me so fast. I had no idea what he did or how he did it. More papers had to be signed and then he handed me a letter saying I was accepted to medical school. I was excited about it but also shocked.

I told myself there were not many people who wanted to go to the Universities at that time. That's why all these offers were coming to me. That's

what I said to myself but later when I thought about it I realized Dinu may have been setting me up. Everything was arranged and I was now going to Italy. The pieces were falling together nicely. It was somewhere in July of 1933 when I signed the final papers.

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In January of the same year, 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. Now it was July, the early days of the Nazis. Dinu called me in.

"I have a very urgent and important message to give to you. I'm not asking you. We're telling you. In eight days, you are leaving for Germany!"

I was stunned, Germany! I didn't know anything about Germany. What will I do in Germany? I don't know one sentence of German. Yes I knew Yiddish well... and stories were already spreading about Hitler. What about Medical School!

He said: " We know. We are aware. The people who are organizing this will take care of everything. You will leave in approximately eight days. I can't tell you more. Just prepare yourself. In a week you'll leave Jerusalem and go to Germany. Everything will be arranged." And he handed me, as was the tradition in the Haganah, a name on a little piece of paper.

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I was so overwhelmed by the situation, and by him. He didn't ask me: "Do you want to go? Do you wish to think about this first?" He said: "You will go!" Here I was trying to decide between studying at a University in London and a Medical School in Italy, and now I'm leaving for Germany. I don't know why, only that Adolf Hitler is now in power.

I was used to following orders without asking questions in the Haganah. Nothing had changed except here the stakes were quite a lot bigger. Now I had a piece of paper in my hand. I was used to that, a name or a word on a piece of paper that meant go there or see that person. We lived in a small community and the Haganah was a small community in a small community.

"I still have two exams," I protested feebly.

"Forget them, you passed. Now you will go!"

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It's interesting that three and a half years later I went there and asked for my diploma. The same secretary still worked there.

"You don't have a diploma, Itamar. You didn't pass your last two exams."

"What do you mean I didn't pass, I didn't take them!"

"They said you disappeared. I went to Professor Dinu. He said you disappeared. We have the document that shows you finished your classes, but you don't have a diploma because you didn't take the last two exams."

It was the first time that I got really angry with all of that and a lot of other things. I gave up Medical School. I gave up London. I was angry that I was ordered by my own people to give up three and a half years of my life without a choice. These were my feelings. I learned to put them aside. There are more important things to describe.

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I took the piece of paper, on which the contact person's code name was written, out of my pocket. I removed it reluctantly as if I could slow time down and deny or avoid what was happening to me. I opened it, knowing who was indicated even though there was no name. I made the contact the same day. There were only a handful of banks in Jerusalem and the man indicated was the director of a small bank as well as a head guy in the Haganah. Of course that piece of information wasn't public knowledge. Now I was neither a high ranking member of the Haganah nor exactly an inexperienced youngster anymore. I was eighteen and a half then, but I was still unnerved and impressed when he took me into his personal office.

He told me that Hitler posed a genocidal threat for the Jews, especially German Jews. He told me that the head of the International Jewish Agency had made an agreement. He talked to me in a way I had never been talked to before. He treated me like a full adult. He brought me into the sacred of the sacred.

"The International Jewish Agency made an agreement with the British Government and the Nazis, that ten young men from Palestine will go to Germany. As you know, after World War I, the League of Nations made Palestine a Protectorate of Great Britain. The British have limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to appease the oil producing Arab nations in the area who are against massive Jewish immigration. This is a secret and highly dangerous arrangement but it opens up the door for a large surge of Jewish immigration. But there is a price. Germany will be divided into ten parts associated with ten different cities and each of you will be responsible for one part. Your appointment is to Frankfurt am Main in the southwest part of Germany. You will be officially responsible to the British Consul in your area." He switched back and forth between Hebrew and Yiddish words.

"Your official duty will be to teach Hebrew to both young and old, all those who wish to emigrate to Palestine. You will get ten thousand entrance visas for Palestine. You will meet with teachers, you will meet with Rabbis, you will teach, you will select, you will decide, and you will have ten thousand visas." He looked at me and saw that I was utterly shocked.

"This is as much as I know of the whole story. The British government is giving ten thousand visas to each one of the ten in return for your following a... " He didn't call it spying, but something like that.

"There's secret information related to each city that the British want. Your job will be to follow their orders and gather that information, the nature of which

even I don't know. You'll be positioned so that it looks like you're working for the British Consulate as someone who is responsible for the Jewish community."

You will be in close contact with a man appointed by the British Consul or somebody else who will be responsible for your life. He will be your contact person. You will always have a contact person in case what they predict comes true. They believe that it will become too dangerous even for the British under the Nazis. They will not be able to stay in Germany for very long."

"The next order of business is for you to meet the person who will show you exactly what you have to do from now until you arrive in Berlin in one week. In Berlin another person will take over. He will take you to your area and acquaint you with the British Consul. You have to change the way you are used to thinking about the British. Up until now they have been your enemy. Now you are working for them and they are responsible for your life."

"You'll be in Berlin for three or four days. British experts will help you understand what you are to do and the means and resources available to help you. Whatever else you are asked to do, your main focus must be to take out *as many Jews as possible* with the ten thousand visas."

"What does that mean: 'as many'? If I have ten thousand visas.... ?"

"No... there are ways to multiply the number. You will find them out or invent them. I only know about you, but I'm sure you and all the nine in other cities will be creative enough to find legal ways to expand that number. There's one other part. You will have to know how to protect yourself. This is an

extremely dangerous job. Your life will be in danger all the time." And for the first time, a river of fear ran through my body.

"That's it. That's all I can tell you. That's all I know." He opened his drawer and withdrew another small piece of paper. "Here. This man will walk you through the steps of the next week. You will have to be well dressed and will be given as much money as you need to purchase a new wardrobe. You'll be issued a brand new passport, not a Palestinian passport, but a real British passport. You'll have to learn your whole fabricated personal history, where you were born, etc. You will appear to be a member of the British Consular Corps who serves in Jerusalem for the British."

It was all mysterious, unfamiliar and unsettling.

"Can I question anything?"

"Question as much as you want but no one has the answers." His demeanor suddenly shifted and I understood that I should leave. It wasn't safe to be seen with him. This man was at the top of the whole Haganah and yet he was cooperating and even representing the British. This did not make sense. I was utterly confused.

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I had a girlfriend. What about my girlfriend, I thought. Can I tell her? How will I explain that I changed my mind about Medical School when I can't tell her

anything? I thought, I'll get permission to tell her. Someone needs to know that I'm going to Germany. The logic I followed in my head went like this. I have to follow orders even though I don't want to go. But if I just go and disappear, nobody will know. What if I die? Someone has to know I went to the "Germany of Hitler". This is what we called it then.

We didn't know much. Newspapers had just started talking about the burning of the Reichstag. The Reichstag was like the White House and the Nazis organized people to burn it and then sentenced the people who burned it as though they were against Hitler. They killed them all. They killed their own people.

The German version was accepted all over the world. They blamed the Communists. But already people were saying full fledged Nazis burned the Reichstag. We already had a feeling. What's going on over there?

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I met the man who was to get me through the next week. He was a very practical sort of man and took me through all the procedures. He told me where to get my passport and ran me through the script to help me learn my history to become a different person, a different personality. So I asked him about the problem of telling my girlfriend. "We're not married but we're pretty serious. I want her to know I'm going to Germany."

"Is she a member of the Haganah?"

" I never talk about the Haganah with her. I'm not supposed to."

"I'll tell her. I'll tell her the truth. I'll take her into the Haganah in a way that she will feel welcome."

"I want to say good-bye to her."

"I'll tell her tonight and tomorrow you can talk to her. You're certainly justified to want one person to know that you are going to the Germany of Hitler."

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The others who trained me, two British people, gave me a stupid description of Hitler. I can say that now after the fact. They were middle men, not really knowing the implications of the information they conveyed. Their task was to describe diplomatic routines and procedures. They knew nothing but what they learned from some inadequate and ignorant briefing. The British didn't know anything but they were supposed to be the experts. Besides, the British government hadn't made their minds up whether Hitler was a friend to be courted or a menace to be destroyed. They were playing both sides of the fence. Little did I know that I was about to become one of their fenceposts.

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When the week of initial preparations was over, I moved ahead to the person who actually took me. The two of us traveled alone, not with the other nine. He wanted us to know of each other because we might be in contact later on, but we were kept apart at this time. He hinted there was a person in Berlin who would be our contact, "who could work miracles", and would give us any help we needed.

That was all. It was strange. I couldn't trust it. Til then I could always trust what I was told. I felt the British description of Hitler's Germany was either stupid or purposefully evasive and I started to feel very shaky and deeply unnerved inside. I had no time to be afraid. I had to buy the right clothing, get a new fancy passport and to remember my history. Everything was perfectly and beautifully arranged, but it just didn't sit well in my guts.

They gave me five British pounds sterling. I had never seen British money, real British money. Israeli money was also a pound, but it was completely different, printed in Palestine and signed by the High Commissioner. That was the only money I knew. I had no knowledge of other currencies or international exchange. In many ways I was sheltered by the Haganah. We were undercover and somewhat protected. We stayed to ourselves and kept low profiles because we assumed the British followed us. I was filled with hatred and suspicion for the British and now suddenly found myself being trained by them and about to become a delegate of the their government. The whole world had turned upside down. But before I had time to think about it, I was taking another step to meet

the person who would take me to Germany.

The man who accompanied me didn't let out any personal information. I didn't know what group he was affiliated with or if he was even Jewish. He talked to me in German, drilling me on simple phrases and wanting me to learn the daily things fast enough to converse without having to think. Suddenly I had a suitcase with all my things in it and I was gone.

My memories of how we traveled to Berlin are sketchy and distorted. We must have gone by boat, but I have only a vague memory of going over. I was overtaken with the feeling of being alone. I was really alone for the first time in my life and I was going to the lions. It was worse than going to the lions. I was sliding down the throat of a stinking beast of unknown proportions. I could rely on only one thing; that I know how to organize Hebrew classes. My assigned task was to distribute ten thousand British entrance visas to Palestine. Their meaning and value was far from clear to me at the moment.

The memories I do have seem dreamlike and unreal. It was the second time in my life I was on such a boat. The first time was leaving Konskovola. On that boat our accommodations were below deck. It was like living underground for six weeks. We couldn't see anything. Occasionally we had permission to go up and drink a cup of water in some daylight. Here I was in First Class all dressed up in a suit. I knew people wore ties but I hadn't ever worn a tie. I didn't even know how to make the knot. I looked in the mirror and didn't recognize myself. I was gone.

In Berlin, the man who took me over disappeared and another one came. He shook my hand, knew my name, spoke Hebrew, spoke German and now I was really under him. He was a very easy going happy person and wasn't much older than myself. He was well muscled, maybe in his middle twenties and nice looking. He was all that I had, the only person I knew in this new world.

"You must have gone through a lot. I receive information about you constantly and I know you've undergone a huge change. I know exactly what they've put you through." I looked at him and decided I could talk openly. I told him I was really on my way to Italy, but somehow the words containing the last remnants of my life that was to be, got drowned out forever as he said: "You don't have to worry now. You are in Germany and you are in real danger, but we..." and for the first time he said "we... we are well organized and quite able to protect and manage your lives. You will always be in contact with me."

"But you're in Berlin. I'll be in Frankfurt am Main!"

"That's my job, not yours. Once you are there a man will be with you constantly. He has a car. No one will question him. No one will check him. Don't pay attention to how he's dressed or who is with him."

You know they all thought that what they were doing was completely hidden from the Germans. The Germans knew everything, all the information, all the plans, all about me. It was amazing. I discovered it slowly as I lived among them.

He continued: "We have a man in Berlin whom you will rarely see. But you

will be able to contact him through your man."

Here again I said: "Frankfurt am Main and Berlin..." I studied the map " ...it's a huge distance!"

"That is our task." They always said: "...our task...".

" We have a man in Berlin who does miracles." These were actually the words he said.

" And your man will... whenever you are in any kind of danger..." He didn't know what kind of danger that might be. Nobody mentioned what it was.

" ...you can contact him and he will get you all the necessary means. You also will have in your passport something nobody has here in Germany, even Germans, except the highest officials. You will have an exit visa that will allow you to leave Germany at any time, day or night, if you get such instructions or if you feel there is no other way out. We assume you won't use it to run away because of how you were selected."

"So you have three things. You have a man in Berlin who has the power to help you out in any circumstance. You have me. After one of our men drives you to Frankfurt am Main you will meet a man who you should think of as your chauffeur. You can tell him everything but he will tell you very little. He will only give you answers to simple technical questions. None of us know what will happen tomorrow."

"First, for four or five days you will travel like tourists. Have a good time. Enjoy yourself. Get to know Berlin and the German countryside. You won't need

money. Our man will pay for everything." With this he ended and deposited me with the man who drove me around to acclimate me to Germany and then south to Frankfurt am Main.

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GERMANY

August, 1933

You brought this up before, people weren't allowed to bring anything out with them?
Nothing, that was the condition.
They couldn't bring anything... not even a suitcase?
Nothing.
No jewels?
A small suitcase. Nothing, just personal things. A warm sweater perhaps...
Pictures?
What?
Could people take pictures?
They didn't clarify details. The man who checked, the Nazi who checked made his own rules.
No jewelry, nothing valuable?
No jewelry, no money, nothing valuable.
So that was the condition of the 10,000 visas?
Yah, that they come out alive.

While getting to know the streets, bars, buildings, theaters and neighborhoods of Berlin, and traveling through Germany on our way to Frankfurt am Mein, I began having a strange feeling that we were both being watched and meeting people who were there to protect us. But I never knew who they were. My driver did a good job taking me all around. I got settled in the air of Germany.

From time to time he mentioned the ten of us with extreme admiration and broke into long discussions of ideology. "You know you were given something that Arlosoroff, the head of the International Jewish Agency, couldn't get in any other way. You will have ten thousand visas for people to leave Germany and enter Palestine! Nobody else even knows of this agreement except the British Consuls and all the people at the top, people I don't even know. You will... the people who know you believe that you can do it." Giving me those indirect compliments just added to my terror. I was eighteen and a half and used to quite a bit of responsibility, but something more than obeying orders and completing a secret assignment was going on in this country, something unfathomable.

His next and final task with me was introducing me to my driver whose name was Bacchus.

"Without your even knowing it, Bacchus will always be around you and available to you. When you have some problem, he will help you solve it. You have to go now." He gave me a list of people to see. "When you go to the British Consul to register, he'll tell you what kind of special 'job' they have in mind for you to do for them. The man in Berlin, I don't know if you will meet him personally, but Bacchus, if it is serious, will contact him and maybe you will see him. He is responsible for the ten of you, for your lives. That is the first secret you have to carry." Instead of calming me down, all these bits of information, signals, innuendos and encouragement, evoked some barely audible voice inside of me. Where am I? What is happening here? Something is

going on here way beyond my ability to comprehend.

Bacchus took me to the house of the Beth Hahalutz, the house of the pioneers. Young people preparing to immigrate to Palestine lived there. Known as the Halutzim, these pioneers worked on German farms for a year learning agriculture in preparation for joining a Kibbutz in Palestine.

The exuberant spirit of the program broke down after the Nazis came to power. Once anti-semitism became the official policy, the youths were routinely exploited, even beaten and sexually abused. Once my Hebrew classes were in place, young people could obtain the coveted entrance visas to Palestine by passing a simple Hebrew test, a must quicker and safer passageway into Palestine.

I was introduced to a few people at the house and dropped off my belongings. Once settled into my room, Bacchus directed me back to the car and took me to the Gauleiter, the Nazi Magistrate for my area, the southwest. He was supposed to assist me in helping people get out.

I wasn't used to traveling alone inside of an automobile. In Palestine I rode on crowded buses, trains and open trucks. It felt like I was in a cage. I felt isolated in this strange huge world, alone with this man Bacchus, who didn't tell me anything about himself or about Germany. I was sure he knew a lot, but I felt I was not supposed to ask questions.

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The Gauleiter acted polite, even friendly, but he told me more about myself than I expected to hear from a Nazi official. I was puzzled.

"We know that you are both a member of the Haganah and that you are here spying for the British. Officially we accept you as a member of the British diplomatic service and will give you all the rights to which your diplomatic passport entitles you. In exchange, we want you to get rid of as many Jews as possible. You will have a free hand in doing that. Of course you will need the British Consul to stamp all the documents."

He ended with an extremely frightening statement.

"You know Germany is already isolated, although we haven't done anything to deserve that." He gave me a speech like from one of Hitler's books. "We are a free people and don't care to harm anybody. But we do want to get rid of the Jews." It was short, friendly, and underneath very hostile.

As we separated he said: "If you have any trouble, you can always contact me." He didn't mention how and telephones weren't all that common then. Here now was another person claiming responsibility for me. Every additional person only frightened me. I was used to being afraid of the British in Jerusalem but this was different. My enemies were inviting me to put my life in their hands. I felt like the bait on the end of a hook as its lowered to the ocean floor, very cold and very alone.

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Before I could digest the experience of meeting with the Gauleiter, Bacchus was already driving me to see the next person, the head of the Jewish community. His name I remember, Dr. Weil. An intensely bright and meticulously practical man, he had offices that provided every service needed by the Jewish community except entrance visas to other countries. Anyone could leave Germany at that time. In 1933, you could file an application for an exit visa and a Nazi official would write down all your bank accounts, assets and property. Once you had done that, you could apply for an entrance visa which had to be approved and stamped by the British Consul. Sometimes the Nazi official explained that seizing everything you owned was justified as an exit tax. Sometimes they just took everything without saying a word.

The entrance visas available to each of the ten were immeasurably valuable in 1933 because a diminishing number of countries were allowing Jews in. Even though the British had declared Palestine a "homeland for the Jews" in 1917 after the First World War, by 1933 the British had issued a series of "White Papers" that severely limited immigration to Palestine to satisfy the Arab Nations with whom they conducted business.

Dr. Weil was realistic and exceptionally knowledgeable about the situation and told me exactly what I could do, what I shouldn't do and what I dare not do. I don't know if he was a medical doctor or an attorney by trade, but he commanded influence in the entire area of the southwest. He was well connected to the Jewish International Agency as well as the underground.

"Don't worry about money, Itamar," he told me. "Whatever you need, come to me, I will give it to you. For transportation, I don't suggest that you drive a car. It's better to have a motorcycle. That way you don't have to depend on the wider roads for travel." He handed me a piece of paper. "This man will get you both a motorcycle and a license. You won't have to deal with money, he's already been paid."

Again and again, he was practical, responsible and knew everything I needed to know. When I was ready, he gave me all the information and resources I needed to go about setting up schools.

"We have a lot of houses and apartment buildings from people who have already left. The government only takes over the more elegant buildings. You can have any of our other buildings for classrooms and we have an abundance of reliable teachers. Select whoever you want here and outside of Frankfurt am Mein." We looked at a map together and he showed me all the larger and smaller communities in the area of the southwest. He pointed out the city of Heidelberg and I told him how much I would love to visit such a famous University.

"You can go anywhere you like but right now you need to go directly to the British Consul and introduce yourself. He will take away your British Palestinian passport and give you another one. It's very important that you stay in close contact with him. He'll be aware of your movements and you should try to establish a good rapport with him."

I got the feeling he had a strained relationship with him. It woke me up to

the complex political realities facing me and my purpose. I had to become alert and very smart immediately. Dr. Weil handed me an envelope containing German money and reassured me that there were funds for anything I wanted to do. I instantly became a person for whom money was no problem. This did not comfort me, however. I was filled with dread. I had a sense of immense responsibility and the giddy sensation of having limitless power placed in my hands as well as the knowledge that it would most certainly evaporate as magically as it appeared. I just didn't know when.

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The British Consul knew everything about me and informed me that almost everyone I would meet in the next few weeks knew everything about me as well. I thought, who am I that everybody knows so much about me and why did we go to all that trouble to fake my identity?

As if reading my mind, the Consul whispered, "I will explain, but first let's go where we can talk in private." He never did answer my question, but instead, led me down a flight of stairs to a small cubicle that had no windows. The whole office was an electric fan, a few chairs and a table.

"I am the British Consul only to the southwest. Britain divided Germany into ten sections... " and I immediately understood why ten of us.

"You were told that you have to do something for the British. It's my job to

tell you what it is." He took out a map. Although I had seen German maps before, this was detailed in an unusual fashion that I couldn't completely grasp. "You have to learn this map in your mind. Never carry a map. Although Germany under the Nazis is a relatively new phenomenon, we already have notions and facts about Germany's major plans. We suspect they plan to build a town underneath the Schwarzwald, the Black Forest." He looked around the room, in one direction and then the other, like an animal checking for an odd scent. He waited and then spoke up. "Nobody can hear us in this room."

For the first time I asked a serious question. "I've heard stories that the Russians and Germans have devices that can listen in to everything that's said in the embassies?"

"You are right. We have those devices too, but don't worry about anything we talk about down here."

"We believe the Nazis are going to build a town under the Schwarzwald. The Schwarzwald is a huge densely wooded forest outside of Frankfurt. This underground city would be undetectable and impregnable to our most advanced weapons. We don't know what they will be doing in there. Is it to direct operations, build weapons or to stock pile ammunition?" Then he used a series of technical terms that I had never heard before. "What we want from you is to follow the building of that town."

Once again, I was shocked. "How can I, a foreigner, find that out?"

"That will be up to you. I can give you little or no help because I can't even

think or dare to travel in that direction. You've just arrived here and even though they know what you are doing, you can also travel around like a tourist. You can go anywhere without raising too many suspicions."

"We want to know where the entrance is. You don't need to worry about the insides. That would be too dangerous. The major thing is, we want you to locate the entrance. Then we will talk. That is what you will do for us in exchange for the ten thousand visas. You can ask for more but I'm sorry I don't know more. This is your contribution, your payment. This is why we wanted ten men, one in each area to dig out secrets that we believe will help us direct the future. This is of absolute urgency for British Intelligence and... " suddenly he shifted into a deeply philosophical tone, "...the future of mankind. In time, I'll tell you what else you can do for us."

I began working it over in my mind how I would do this. I didn't really know anything about the Schwarzwald. I imagined I could surely find it on a map but wouldn't such a place be protected so that even the average German citizen couldn't go there? How would I be able to?

The Consul was a charismatic man who was comfortable with power. He impressed me as knowing a lot about the Nazis. I felt completely ignorant next to him about these things.

"Do you have any questions?" At first I said no because the whole thing was a question.

"Can I contact people?"

"I would suggest you don't do it. People will contact you to find out what you are doing. You cannot trust any person. Don't even speak with your friend, the Jewish leader. Officers are watching him and listening in on his activities all the time. Surely not with those who will become your friends where you are staying. Better not. A friend is not a friend here. You are living among people who *know* what you are supposed to do."

"What do you mean *'know'*?"

"The Germans know we're using you to gather information. Unfortunately, their spying system is better than ours." It was now August. Hitler had been in power only eight months.

"You don't know the history, many people don't. Hitler and his group planned how they would take control of the Reichstag years before. They had it all organized and now they are acting on those plans. The underground city is part of that, to build something huge. They don't know how to finance it yet but they will get the money. They have their own money and they will have more and more Jewish money as people leave and they confiscate their assets. Whoever has money, they will take it. They have planned this for years and have the best technical people helping them."

I sat there wondering how will I do this? It was all unknown. I didn't know the Schwarzwald or how to get there. He tells me to inform him only if I have something, otherwise not to talk about it. He says clearly don't answer or discuss it with anybody. The burden of this first terrifying mystery weighed

heavily on me.

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I thought: I'm sitting here all by myself... like a little... like a little bug that wants to reach out into this... It gave me the sense of the responsibility for the unknown. Now, when I am excited in my psychoanalytic work, when I am reaching into the unknown of a puzzling patient, I always remember sitting there in that little room with the powerful British Consul to the southwest.

He finished the conversation by giving me two or three ways to contact him in an emergency. We went back up to his official office and he handed me a new passport. I didn't open it. "Be very careful to keep this safe. It will protect you in many dangerous situations." I put it in my pocket with mixed feelings of pride and panic; and only took it out later in the privacy of my room. I could see it was a diplomatic passport, but I really had no idea what that entitled me to. I had never seen a real diplomat before today. And there it was, a visa, a permanent in and out visa to Switzerland. The thought that I could take the passport and go to Switzerland gave me some relief, but that was just in my imagination. I didn't dare. I don't know why.

Having now three people, the Gauleiter, the head of the Jewish community and now the British Consul, to protect me, made me feel, today I would say ambivalent and frightened. Who am I? Why am I so important? Luckily I had

enough common sense to realize what I'm doing must be very important and dangerous. What I had was a new passport and money. Soon I would go to that garage and get a motorcycle.

The man in Berlin was the one I hadn't met yet. He was responsible for all of us. So it became an "us". Until then it was just "me". I built a unity of "us", but an "us" of people I couldn't contact and couldn't talk to. All the usual things a young man relies on were forbidden. My one outlet, the one chute opened to me in this whole dammed up world, was to start building schools and become familiar with the little cities and the big cities. There was Wiesbaden, a beautiful city. And Heidelberg, with its famous University. And Frankfurt. I fantasized about visiting these Universities and on occasion allowed myself to day dream about studying in London and hanging out at pubs with students from all over the world. Or what it would have been like attending medical classes in Italy instead of sitting here in the dark sheepishly peeking at a diplomatic passport that was designed to save my life if the British or the Nazis decided to kill me.

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GERMANY

1933-1934

What was it like when you first got there?

It was as if everybody knew you, but nobody was supposed to know you. But you should also know them and pretend to not know them. What

was known was hidden. And what was hidden
inside of me was an encyclopedia of the unknown.

Everywhere they asked for my identification. To survive I became whatever they imagined me to be at any given moment. They were so well organized that I was envious. They knew where I was at all times. But who "they" were was often a mystery to me. Who is watching me today: the Nazis, the British, the Jewish Agency or all of them? And in the early days everything was both opaque and made easy for me. For example, I needed a motorcycle. Within days I had a beautiful motorcycle and a license with no red tape. I wanted to enroll in a class in group psychology at the University of Frankfurt. Within ten minutes of entering the registrar's office, I had entrance to whatever classes I wanted to take.

They knew I had been the principal of a school. They didn't know I was a principal for twenty or thirty boys and girls who didn't have chairs, who didn't know anything, who were actually illiterate. I looked at myself in the mirror. Who am I? What kind of a man am I becoming? I had the power of the British Consul behind me and the power of that man, Dr. Weil, from the Jewish community, who could give me unlimited buildings, materials, money and teachers. The Nazi Gauleiter would help me in any possible way to get Jews out of Germany. I went from a sinking sense of having my whole life ripped out from under me in Palestine, to residing in a kind of hallucinatory heaven in the Germany of Hitler in

which I had unlimited powers. You know what *"yahanem"* is? That describes the two worlds, heaven and the reality underneath. I was now inhabiting the realm of heaven. I thought of something I wanted, it came to me.

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The teachers I gathered together had little experience teaching the modern Hebrew I knew and loved so well. They could take up hours and hours of your time teaching archaic pronunciations, details of the history of the language and technicalities of Hebrew grammar they learned as children.

I didn't care about grammar at all. I wanted people to talk, read and write rapidly. It disturbed me when some of the teachers organized themselves against my quick study method of teaching Hebrew, but it didn't stop me. They wanted to keep on teaching in the manner they had been taught, denying that learning Hebrew quickly was now a matter of life and death.

Learn Hebrew: get an entrance visa to Palestine. No waiting, no bribes, no year of hard labor on a farm. Just take a simple Hebrew test and escape with your life. People couldn't and didn't want to see what was coming.

Politics was on my side in this case. With Dr. Weil, their leader, on my side, the teachers didn't dare do anything against me. They held him in high regard and were all dependent on his assistance.

Gradually the teachers understood the urgency of my mission and rallied

behind me. We created a small revolution. The schools were free. More and more people came to study once the word got out that young people could get a visa to Palestine by passing a simple Hebrew test instead of a year's hard work and abuse on a farm. This was very attractive to those who were increasingly aware of the threat of the growing Nazi movement. Many parents got their children out and stayed behind. Others ignored the rumors and never considered leaving Germany.

Things were changing rapidly for all Germans, not just Jews. Increasingly frequent incidents occurred near the house where I stayed. Police wagons would come in the middle of the night. An approaching siren meant close the windows, put up the curtains and put out all lights. We waited for the yelling. Sometimes there was shooting. Next morning we saw a grief stricken man or woman, their son, wife, daughter or husband disappeared.

This was 1933-1934, Jews and non-Jews alike were grabbed out of their homes at night. Months later a small postcard came back saying, "So and so has been put in a work camp."

You could disappear because someone accused you of being against Hitler, or mentally imbalanced or homosexual. Fear and paranoia seeped into the culture like the bite of a poisonous spider, slowly immobilizing people's thinking processes and distorting some ordinary sense of reality. It was too frightening even to try and make sense of what was happening because you couldn't. Some denied that anything was changing. Some spun magical theories

to weave sense into their confusion. Others grabbed onto the known and familiar as one would grip a steering wheel before the impact of a collision.

That our schools worked and attracted so many people was proof that I was achieving one of the aims that brought me here. That was my steering wheel. I grabbed onto it with a passion and it protected me from going crazy. Young people picked up the language quickly. They were delighted that after two or three months they started to speak. What I was doing made sense to many people, but I had my doubts. Many people left for Palestine. I asked myself many times: "Was I doing a good thing?" Logically I could say, yes, of course. But I never knew if the Nazis really let them go. They left. They disappeared. Was that a good thing?

I began traveling around Germany's southwest by motorcycle. The countryside was green and lush like I imagined Eden in the Bible. So unlike the low desert landscape of Palestine, the hills and rolling acres of farmland were moist and joyously bursting with flowers, vegetables and tall leafy trees. Germany was incredibly beautiful. City after city, I asked and picked up little things about the Schwarzwald. Whenever I glanced at what I had to do for the British in my mind, consciously, not to mention unconsciously, I turned away from it. I didn't want to do it. I saw the power of the Nazis. It was too frightening.

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A RABBI IN A LITTLE CITY

As I traveled all over my area of the southwest, I met the leaders of every Jewish community I could locate, trying to alert them of the coming danger, encouraging them to send their youth to our schools to learn Hebrew and leave Germany. I remember long conversations with a Rabbi in a little city who refused to cooperate. I went back week after week, for months, trying to change his thinking. He told his congregation, "*God will not allow Hitler to destroy the Jews!*" He promised his people immunity. He wouldn't encourage them to attend the schools or inquire about the visas.

I struggled with this but I couldn't blame him. He believed he was rescuing his community from me! I was the intruder. I was the disbeliever. To him I was scaring the parents into giving me their children, with stories of a future calamity so I could use their children to build up a Jewish State in Palestine.

In our long conversations I used a little psychology, a little mysticism, but I had no impact on him. He was delighted to speak with a Hebrew and Biblical scholar from Jerusalem. This Rabbi who believed he had rescued his community from me would listen to my arguments and my beliefs and smile and say, "You belong with my village. You are just as much a believer as I am." He saw me as the one with the misguided thinking. He sat with me somewhat amused as though he was indulging me. He thought he would convince me, take me into his community and convert me.

The facts, as each of us saw them, led us to very contradictory conclusions. To take out the youngsters or families was contrary to his beliefs. His thinking went against my logic but he was like a Messiah for his community. They followed him not me. His entire community was put on the trains and taken to concentration camps.

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What was he thinking when they took him away? How did he comprehend that?

There is a simple explanation for that. He didn't believe that he died. We say he died but for him he didn't. We have no way of knowing. That's one of the deficiencies, or better to say difficulties, of our psychotherapeutic treatment as well. We reach points with a patient where it is a matter of belief. Sometimes it's our belief and sometimes it's the patient's belief. How do we reconcile two contradictory beliefs?

It's like the story about the boy who was dying because his bed was facing the wrong direction. His beliefs were stronger than his biological instincts.

All the boys from his tribe believed as he did so nothing was strange about what happened when he sat up. If he would have died we wouldn't have known anything. It wouldn't have been something unusual for them, just for us. They never questioned their own beliefs.

This is the problem and the beauty with any kind of orthodoxy. I mean there's beauty in orthodoxy, the connection to the deep essence of history, something firm to live by. It's very rich but it's also rigid.

Freud thought the intellect, the faculty of reason was the solution to this problem. In a dialogue with Albert Einstein called "Why War?" he said:

"Let themselves come under the dictatorship

of reason."

The dictatorship of reason! Was he laughing at himself when he said that?

He was aware that his solution was too idealistic but also that there is no solution to the problem. He got stuck there.

He's also saying that being under the dictatorship of reason is equally oppressive.

Of course it is. It's a dictatorship. If people are under this spell of the "dictatorship of reason", then reason becomes a religion.

All of a sudden you "have to be" be reasonable. And sometimes it's better to be intuitive not reasonable.

Right, you see he was stuck.

If you had been reasonable, you wouldn't have gone to Germany.

Exactly.

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THE NEW HITLER FREEWAY

GERMANY

1934-1936

I was invited to the opening of a new Hitler Freeway connecting the north and south of Germany. Thousands of people gathered in the center of Frankfurt where the two roadways met. Huge barricades lined both sides of the road. Where I was standing the freeway passed five or ten feet below street level, so everyone was straining their necks, being forced to peer down into the celebration. What I saw temporarily stopped my heart from beating and nauseated my entire body. It conjured up cruel ceremonial images of public stonings, witch burnings and times when men, women and children were

publicly exhibited and humiliated for the popular crimes of their time.

Three men, the Bishop and the Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt, and the head of the Chamber of Commerce, were on their knees, surrounded by eight or ten people with whips and holstered weapons, forced to scrub the new roadway clean with toothbrushes and children's water pails. Bands were playing. Soldiers were singing and shooting off guns. Fireworks were exploding over the crush of thousands of people on either side of the roadway. The soldiers were snapping their riding quips at the men, shouting for them to go faster, to clean faster with the little toothbrushes. Everywhere were shouts of "Sieg Heil, Heil Hitler!" My anger was almost uncontainable. I thought, what if ten people jumped down, then others would follow. The Nazis couldn't stop tens of thousands of people.

I couldn't move. I wanted to jump down so badly but I knew I would only be joined by a volley of bullets and that would be the end of me. I would be dead. I would simply disappear. I looked around and thought, this country is crazy. Why do they do this? What does it serve? Why do they need to humiliate their enemies in such a fashion?

I walked back to the house of the Beth Hahalutz. I needed the comfort of a familiar place where people were neither afraid of each other nor humiliating each other. I wanted to cry out or cry tears like a baby but I had no tears. I was alone in the Germany of Hitler with no one to speak with. The shock of what I had seen was like a chemical reaction solidifying a new hard layer of skin into my body. I

needed it so my feelings of hatred and disgust would not overwhelm me from the inside. I needed to be part of this rotten society and detached from it all at once in order to survive. I became even more determined to complete my task but I had to stiffen my emotions to live with them.

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A GIRLFRIEND

Dr. Weil told me I could live anywhere, but I felt good around the young pioneers of the Hahalutz movement even though I had to keep a good part of myself hidden from them. I loved the comradery and I didn't need to eat at restaurants. They benefitted too because we had extra money for food. There was a girl named Judith at the house who was a member of the resistance against Hitler. She ran away from her parents when she was fourteen or fifteen, now lived with the Halutzim. She became my girlfriend.

As our relationship became more intimate, I had to carefully guard my true identity. When we were alone, outdoors enjoying the cool shade of a tree, or the pleasure of the warm silence of our small bedroom, ever so gently, she would ask: "What are you doing here?" She knew I came from Palestine. "Why did you come to Germany?" In the beginning I gave her the official answer: "I'm teaching Hebrew to those who want to leave Germany and go to Palestine." She was too smart for such a superficial answer. "For that, the Nazis wouldn't let you in."

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Somewhere between 1936 and 1937 when things were becoming increasingly dangerous, we made a special trip to her father's house to convince him to leave with his wife and two little son's, my girlfriend's two little brothers. Judith hadn't seen him for many years. "Oh, so now you come," he said sarcastically as we stood in his living room. Naively I announced: "I've come to take you out of Germany!" He turned away from us and opened a large wooden display case. He took out a box of military medals, one was a blue or a green cross, I don't remember. He had proudly served in the German army during World War I.

"Look", he said. "I served proudly with my country during the First World War. I am now an influential German citizen who owns a factory that makes boots for the highest Nazi officials. I have contracts with all the Nazis." Practically hissing at us, he went on. "They will not touch me." Bravely or stupidly, I don't know which, I spoke up.

"Don't you see what's going on!"

"No I don't see. It's only the *dirty* Jews, who never worked, that are sent away, not people like me!"

My girlfriend pulled at my arm. She was terrified of him. I said: "Okay, I just wanted to offer you a way out, an entrance visa to Palestine."

"Oh," he laughed at me. "For Palestine! Why would I want a visa for a

filthy backward country like Palestine. If I wanted a entrance visa to leave, I get one for *Switzerland*, any high ranking Nazi official would give it to me."

"Then why don't you?"

"Because I have no desire to go to Switzerland. I have no desire to leave Germany!"

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When Judith and I returned to Palestine we lost contact with her parents and two little brothers. Sometime after the war, in 1948-9 a woman told us that she had been Judith's parents in one of the concentration camps and that they had both died. My girlfriend wept for the rest of her life, not so much for her parents, but for her two little brothers whom she had raised like sons while her mother was busy entertaining German merchants at the boot factory.

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One day Judith and I went off on the motorcycle in the direction of the Swartzwald. We found a quiet place where the two of us could sit.

"What I am about to tell you is extremely dangerous. You help me out with all my other activities so I've decided to tell you the whole story." She didn't act afraid, even though she surely was. She merely said, "We'll look into it. I have

friends." "No friends," I said, "No friends. The two of us have to look into it."

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And so, together, we began to examine all kinds of things in Germany. The Nazis were seizing the most valuable and beautiful properties from their citizens. Girls, from the age of fourteen to eighteen, were placed in these luxury mansions and made available to the SS men for short two or three day vacations. The idea was to impregnate these girls with "Children for Hitler".

One evening there was an advertisement for a propaganda movie about these vacations. I asked her if she was (bold enough) ready to sneak into the movie with me.

"If we can get out alive?"

"I can't guarantee that, but supposedly I am protected." Like her father, I started to believe they wouldn't touch me. I felt I could protect her as well.

We waited until the movie had started so it was pitch dark. There seemed to be only SS men inside. When we sat down I must say I was more afraid than she was, because whenever they showed Hitler, they all stood up and we stood up with them, all saluting and shouting "Heil Hitler". The movie openly showed how the men enjoyed themselves. By today's standards it would be considered pornographic, with the exception that toward the end the men began singing along with the Nazi songs that ran along with the credits. We left quietly and

came out alive.

Two days later, it happened, the first reaction. I decided to take a shortcut on my way home and woke up in a bed, with no sense of a body, only an increasing awareness of a vague sensation of pain. A doctor was there. The British Consul and the Gauleiter were there. They knew just how to beat you up so that nothing was broken. The sting of the doctor's shot was registering in my arm as the familiar sound of the Gauleiter's coarse voice cut its way through the haze in my brain.

"We are very sorry for this unfortunate incident."

I'll never forget his next sentence and his next gesture.

"Not all of our youth is educated. We still have hooligans in Germany. When we find who did this, they will be punished." With that he handed the British Consul my passport, my precious passport, my protection, which was now torn and caked in mud.

"Our doctor checked him over. We'll take him to our hospital." He turned to the British Consul expecting approval.

"Thank you very much but we have our own doctor at the Consulate. I prefer to take him there." With that I was dressed, given another shot and taken away.

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Nothing was broken and two weeks later I began to walk. My first trip was to the Gauleiter.

"Why? Why did you have me beaten? A group of Nazis wouldn't do that without your knowledge."

"On your last visit here I asked you a question. Do you remember? It is a shameful situation for the German people that the ten of you have a leader in Berlin, but we cannot get his name. You know who he is. I didn't ask you directly. I assumed that a few days after we talked, you would come to me with his name, but you ignored me. This is my warning. I need his name or at least a way to reach him."

I denied I knew anything about such a man. I offered to ask around and tell him if I discovered anything. It was a death sentence for that man, this man whom I had never seen and who was responsible for my life. I went back to the house and there was Bacchus waiting for me. I sat in the passenger seat and said, "Just drive." As I relayed the story to him, he turned the car to the north, to Berlin. "We have no choice. You have to see him." That was the only time I met the man.

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I expected a giant. I imagined some magnetic tornado of a man exuding power and cunning. Instead, a regular sized, soft spoken guy approached me

saying, "Itamar, this is what's happening. One of your group was killed yesterday. I've thought of a solution so you won't be the second." He reached into a drawer and handed me a small document.

"Show this to your Gauleiter. Tell him that if you are harmed, we deliver this to Nazi headquarters. Tell him that destroying the document is useless. The original is not in Germany." He looked me straight in the eye as if to create a rope, a life line between us. We shook hands and he said, "Go."

I found Bacchus at the agreed meeting place. We waited until evening and drove back to Frankfurt. We were silent for a very long time. I withdrew the document from my pocket with the attention, focus and caution one might use while defusing a bomb. I clicked on my little flashlight with my thumb, and unfolded and spread the document out on my knees. As if in perfect counterpoint, my throat constricted. This flimsy paper oracle of my future would basically decide whether I would live, or whether I would die.

The document listed numerous examples of the Gauleiter's participation and leadership in the Communist Party. Since much of the attraction of the Nazi movement in the 1930's was its vicious opposition to the evils of communism, and its mobilization of both anti-Jewish and anti-Communist fear and hatred, such a document was the Gauleiter's one way ticket to a work camp.

"What you have there is a good insurance policy," said Bacchus, "but remember no one is a hundred percent secure in this crazy system. All alliances and dealings are based on fear and continually shifting. Everyone is afraid of

everyone else. Your life is now somewhat protected because of a new but delicate shift in the balance of power between you and the Gauleiter. He has threatened to kill you unless you give him the information he wants and his superiors will kill him if you give them the information you have. We'll see the Gauleiter as soon as we arrive in Frankfurt. People can disappear quickly in this country.

"Did you recognize the man in Berlin? His name is Enzo Sereni, the son of Mussolini's personal physician. He is working for the ten of you... now nine I guess. He does many things for the Jews. No one knows why and no one has asked him. Even if the Nazis found out who he is, they would be somewhat restricted in how they could respond because Mussolini knows he is here. Another delicate balance."

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When we arrived in Frankfurt I went directly to the Gauleiter.

"You have something for me?"

"Yes. I have something for you to read."

"You expect me to take this joke of a document seriously? It's a bad forgery at best."

"Tear it up if you like. The original is kept outside of Germany."

I must have looked pale, and frozen in place, as I stood there while he

read it again and again. It was all I could do to hold my ground and not speak. His intimidating official uniform and gun holster filled my entire line of vision. He easily could have lifted his revolver and shot me on the spot. I would have disappeared like (a puff of smoke) many of the others. But he too suddenly became afraid.

" Okay... this is what I'll do. Your life will be protected. No one will know why or how. If I cannot protect you, my promise to you is that I will let you know. You better destroy this thing, I don't want it."

"I don't want to carry it around either."

Together, we set it on fire, and watched it burn in his ashtray. The blue orange flame of that little fire welded our fates together like siamese twins connected at the throat. If one breathed, the other continued to breathe. Our lives now depended on each other.

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LIFE MAY BE SHORT, ONE MUST BE DARING

Once this new understanding with the Gauleiter was in place, I felt freer and more courageous to travel into the Schwartzwald. Every weekend Judith and I took a picnic and traveled in the direction of the Schwartzwald. Sometimes we penetrated deep into the forest and enjoyed a night in some little hotel and

sometimes we casually traversed the perimeter hoping for some chance clue event to aid us in fulfilling our task for the British.

On one such trip Judith took a picture. We looked like any two German citizens out for a motorcycle ride only we didn't display a swastika anywhere on our persons. The picture was important to her because she was reconciled that I wouldn't come out of Germany alive, even though I denied it.

As we were exploring some smaller dirt roads we encountered a rather large bus that shouldn't have been on such a road. The drivers were young boys transporting what looked like prisoners or workers somewhere. They were lost and mistook us for German officials because of our motorcycle gear. They told us the directions they had been given and (showed us their map) asked us for help. Together we came up with an idea of where they were supposed to go. We waited and proceeded behind them down a "Restricted Entry Private Road." Whenever we heard a vehicle we pulled off to the side and let it pass.

The electrifying jolt of this chance happenstance and the whoosh of pumping adrenalin so overwhelmed our senses that we didn't notice the change in temperature as the air suddenly turned cold and a light snow began to fall as we cautiously followed behind them. It wasn't supposed to snow this time of year however we had heard that the weather in the Schwartzwald could be unpredictable. We drove on, not willing to go back, convinced with absolute certainty that we were just about to discover what we were looking for.

As the motorcycle took us even deeper into the Schwartzwald, the light

snowfall became a blizzard. Reluctantly, I had to admit that I could no longer see the road. We knew if we stood still and waited for the storm to blow over, we would freeze to death. We proceeded on foot, step by step, holding the handlebars of the motorcycle and carefully guiding it forward. Suddenly the whole front wheel lifted up and the motorcycle stopped as if some huge metal vise had seized it in its jaws. The wheel was jammed on some obstacle we could not clearly make out. We abandoned the motorcycle and desperately looked for shelter until we spotted one of those small ranger huts the government maintains. Equipped with firewood and a wood stove we were able to keep ourselves warm but dared not sleep.

With the first light of morning we retraced our steps as best we could to the motorcycle. The front wheel was lodged between overgrown tree roots and a huge rock pointed in the direction, not of the road, but of a steep cliff that dropped down to a lake. If not for the rock, we would have stumbled right over the edge. We looked at each other knowing we had just barely slipped out of the reach of death's welcoming (beckoning) fingers. We felt protected by something.

Looking around, we got our bearings, and got the hell out of there. The motorcycle wasn't too badly damaged. After brushing off the snow, walking it for a short while and thanking it for finding that particular rock to stop on, we were able to start it up and drive back to Frankfurt.

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GERMANY
1937

The British Consul was impressed with my discovery but had other things on his mind. He was leaving. "Germany is too dangerous," he said. Within a week a new man had replaced him and it wasn't certain whether this new man was British or German. Whatever he was, he had very little interest in my protection or my purpose. My well being now relied fully on Bacchus, his organization and the Gauleiter.

I stepped up my efforts to get people out. People became more ready and desperate to go. More of the ten disappeared and were assumed to be dead. Rumors that people were taken to concentration camps became more widespread. We continued to construct families and marry complete strangers, assigning them a full litter of children, so that eight or ten people could enter Palestine on one entrance visa.

The new Consul would leave the room when I came to put the official stamp on the certificates. Was he turning his back so I could have a free hand with his official stamp or was it my imagination? We ignored the one year farm labor requirements. We ignored the Hebrew language qualifications. There were no more rules. We put all our energies into getting as many people through the system as possible.

Dr. Weil, the head of the Jewish Community, came to me and told me of transports carrying carloads of Jews from one city to another in an effort to

speed up emigration. He thanked me for the work I was doing and shook my hand. "Itamar, you won't see me again. I am going away too, but I won't be leaving Germany." I assumed he was going underground.

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Events, time, the disappearance of people familiar to me, the rapid emigration of hundreds of adults, youth and children; everything seemed to be accelerating faster than I could keep up with as if moving toward some climactic finale or turning point. One morning a young man dressed in regular clothing, not a uniform, knocked at my door. "A Nazi officer is waiting for you outside." I went out and was motioned into a car. The Gauleiter greeted me.

"I am keeping my promise, Itamar. You must leave Germany this afternoon. I have received orders to have you killed. Tomorrow I will issue an order and people will come to your house to take you away. I have kept my promise. Now go."

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PART 2

Palestine, 1937

the tree joins the forrest

When you came back from Germany were you able to describe what was happening there?

No. We didn't talk about it. No one talked about it. We just threw ourselves into making our new lives.

KIBBUTZIM

"New and unclear was the life of the kibbutz. Everything was foggy.
The commune itself wasn't a doctrine.
It wasn't a law not to be questioned.
It didn't come down to us from other nations. We didn't read about it in any books.
This is a way of life that we selected because it fit
our wishes and was appropriate for our state of being.
Others don't have to share it with us.
We have no intention to impose it on anybody else but ourselves.
The family in the past, or the Kibbutz in our future life is the safest shelter,
the most genuine one, which will rescue the human being
from his hard struggle
against an overwhelming void which leads to meaningless and futility in life."

Rough draft of the Kibbutz as seen by the first 10 Kibbutz members written in 1911.
From a lecture at the University of Chicago by Itamar Yahalom, circa 1956.

THE KIBBUTZ MOVEMENT

These are settlements where everything acquired
such as furniture, clothing, tools, money, machinery, livestock and property
and all of what is created, produced or grown;
all of this property belongs to all the people in this place.
The individual has nothing, and everybody has everything.
Itamar Yahalom, 1956

I survived. After a few weeks Judith made her way to Palestine and we were reunited at Kibbutz Bah-mitz-nei. We became like new born children who start from the beginning in a brand new family. Surrounded by other young couples, all starting over, we lived together at Bah-mitz-nei for almost a year.

We worked incredibly hard work just to maintain the barest existence. When Judith and I came to Bah-mitz-nei in 1937, the kibbutz hardly had enough food to feed its members. Most of us worked menial jobs off the Kibbutz in the nearby cities of Haifa and Tel Aviv to bring in money. We caught rides to town with truckers since hardly anyone had a car. We quibbled over what to buy with our meager resources. We had one fork for every person and shared our one and only knife. It was a big decision whether to purchase an additional knife or more important necessities.

After a year of such an existence, the Central Committee, the loosely formed acting government of Jewish Palestine, asked six or seven of us to prepare a site for a new settlement, Kibbutz Dahlia. The Central Committee bought the land and alerted the nearby kibbutzim to send work parties to the site to clear the rocks and build a water tower that would serve both as a look out

post and a holding tank for our precious supply of water. Even though Palestine was governed as a British Protectorate, the Central Committee made decisions about the creation of new settlements and the relocation of incoming refugees.

On the evening before the day set for the building of the tower, under cover of the darkness, men and women from the neighboring kibbutzim converged on the site with tools, food, trucks and wagons carrying the half preassembled water tower. They traveled across the desert floor, over areas with no roads and no water, carrying everything needed to arrive in the morning, quickly erect the structure in one day and leave six or seven of us there to test whether the area was safe enough to bring more settlers.

The group of us, in a state of near terror, stayed close together for the seven days, with only a modest supply of food and water, sleeping bags, a few guns and a little bit of ammunition. Two of us stood guard at all times, positioning ourselves on top of the tower. We were in the middle of a great expanse of seemingly endless desert, near no road, with no means of transportation of our own. Totally vulnerable to attack on all sides, we couldn't even light a fire because it would be a sign to the Arabs that something was going up. Even though we owned the land, Palestine was still operating under a hodge podge of British and Turkish law. Ownership wasn't always clear. You might buy the land in what you thought was the official legal manner, but frequently others would show up and claim prior ownership of the land.

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"Why did you have to go back to such a primitive way of life?" friends have asked me on numerous occasions. Life on the Kibbutz was a utopian movement back to a simpler way of life; a joining together of many different ideas and ideals and a rebellion against old traditions. Some felt agriculture was the only way we could create a genuine Jewish homeland since Jews had been denied land ownership in so many countries during their history. We wanted to create a new society without the restraints of the old rules and traditions in order to become a new kind of Jew. We didn't want to be the kind of Jew that would make all of Europe want to kill us.

We rejected the celebration of the holidays except for the Sabbath, Shabbat. We refused to be ashamed of our bodies and our sexuality. We flaunted our belief in free love. Couples didn't get married in the beginning and we renounced separate showers and bathrooms for men and women.

We gave up our eastern European surnames for Hebrew names. Our family name, Finkelstein, which means "shining or sparkling stone" in German, was exchanged for Yahalom, which means "diamond" in Hebrew. To be a Yahalom meant you had to be stronger than most and more brilliant than most.

Work, community and equality were the basis of the Kibbutz, but equality did not mean that things were divided into equal shares for all.

The motto was: "From each according to his ability;
to each in accordance with his needs."
Not everyone needs the same and not everyone can give the same.
In the beginning there was no money, hardly any food.
There were no privately owned clothes.
Clothes were in one room. You found the size that fit you.
No property, no capital.
If there was something, it wasn't held privately.
Everything belonged to everyone, to all, to the community.
Dov Yahalom, nephew to Itamar Yahalom
from a conversation after Itamar's funeral, August 2001

Even children didn't belong to their parents, they belonged to everyone. Children lived in separate communal housing away from their parents. The parents spent the whole day working. Special teachers raised the children because we believed they knew how to work with children maybe even better than the parents. After all, the parents weren't trained to be parents.

Mother or father, at the same time each day, maybe mid-day or in the afternoon, would take their children out of the children's area and spend an hour or two with them and then bring them back. Some parents chose to be with their children in the evening and stayed with them until they fell asleep. The small rooms cradled three or four beds, and on each bed a child with one, sometimes two parents sitting, singing, telling a story or silent. The parents or the child might whisper a secret or ask a question so as to coax or cajole the parent to stay a bit longer. *"Tell me something else... read me another story... I have something to ask..."* The Kibbutz Movement was our grand experiment. Many of these arrangements changed over the years as we discovered what worked and what didn't work.

Every decision relating to Kibbutz life was discussed at length by all the members and voted on at weekly community meetings usually following the Sabbath. We gave up the diverse languages of our birth places and forced ourselves to speak only Hebrew at these meetings, attempting to destroy traces of our previous immigrant identities. I laugh with a deep sense of irony and sadness when I realize we were trying to redesign human nature.

Slowly, over time, we took these discarded pieces of ourselves back, realizing that traditions bring a group together. The old traditions took on new meanings. We wove them into the rhythms of nature. Every holiday became an occasion to plant or harvest a fruit tree or flowers: to celebrate some part of nature and our nature.

The desert infused us with a sense of peace. Living out on the land was like a rite of passage, and most of us had ridden some sort of boat or train through hell to get to Palestine. We were enveloped in a mystical, passionate process of purification. It brought out the creativity in all of us, to feel like we were growing something inside of ourselves and outside. We worked hard to make every tomato grow. I'm sure my love for tomatoes stems from those early days.

It was at Kibbutz Dahlia that I collected and dried one of each of the wild desert flowers that grew around our settlement. Each and every flower demonstrated the mystery, fragility and unique style of adaptation employed for survival under the most impossible conditions.

You became modern Adams and Eves.

Yes. We became Adams and Eves. Only we constructed Eden. Each stone and seed was placed and planted in the concerted effort of everyone's body working together. We felt in harmony with the desert, without shame and equal among each other. There were even snakes.

I imagine there were plenty of snakes!

Yah, we had snakes. But we had... what do you call them? They have long brown tails...

You mean scorpions?

Yes scorpions. You picked up a rock and that became four hours of unbelievable pain until it subsided. That I cannot forget! We had one glass of vodka for a person who got bitten. That was all we had!

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KIBBUTZ DAHLIA 1938

In the beginning of Kibbutz Dahlia, six people were voted into leadership positions. I was among the first six and we made everything up as we went along. I was made treasurer with no real experience dealing with money, and had to go to the banks and negotiate 30 and 40 year loans with only our dreams of the future as collateral. My job was considered the luxury job because I got to travel to different cities, visiting coffee shops and talking with people and living, for Palestine, what would be considered a fairly cosmopolitan life. But when I returned to the Kibbutz at night, I took my turn in the kitchen like everyone else, washing an abundant harvest of greasy pots and pans.

My wife worked in a little factory making water meters for the British. Anyone with good hands, who could quickly and precisely assemble forty small

wheels, could get such a job. She was good at it. She worked along side a German mathematician, our neighbor, and they laughed and loved to secretly speak German with each other. She teased him about his bad Hebrew and they competed to see who could make the most meters and meet their quotas first.

Besides my job as treasurer for the Kibbutz, I had a reputation for knowing about setting up schools and psychology and was regularly called upon to help with disturbed children and trouble making teenagers: all casualties of the upheavals and disturbances of the war and relocation.

What were my credentials for such work in the late 1930's? I had been to college, read ten chapters of Freud at the age of 15, and rescued thousands of Jewish youth with the 10,000 certificates. But underneath it all was my ability to dance with the unknowns of this accelerated surging and swelling of human migration and make them into a symphony.

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For the next ten years, I was swept up in a whirlwind of activities in both the Kibbutz Movement and the Haganah. There were three main but separate Kibbutz Movements which evolved into Israel's present political system: the right wing religious movement, the labor movement and the left labor movement. My party was the left labor movement, the Ha'shomer Ha'tzair, but we were more socialist than communist. The Kibbutz voted me their representative to the

outside and in that capacity I traveled, working for both the Ha'shomer Ha'tzair and the Haganah.

Torrents of refugees flooded into Palestine. Before World War II, immigration flowed from Eastern Europe. Now, thousands of people flooded out of Western Europe. Trainloads of refugees and concentration camp survivors had to be escorted from Europe to Palestine. We traveled with the trains to facilitate border crossings and to supply the basic needs of people who had nothing and were traumatized to be riding in trains.

The Kibbutz Movements were instrumental in welcoming and settling these new citizens into a new way of life. People needed to learn Hebrew and to adjust to new professions and a new culture. Germans, Austrians, Roumanians, Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, and Russians had to learn how to work along side each other. Those used to professional middle class European society needed to learn to work the land and perform tasks formerly reserved for servants. It didn't always turn out well.

The war to our north demolished families, buildings, culture and borders like a fist smashing down on a table over and over again until everything was crushed to pieces. In Palestine we gathered up these broken pieces, these hundreds of thousands of people whose lives had been shattered, into the spirit and hard work of building a new country. They became the raw materials we fused together to build the new Palestine.

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I was living an interesting and exciting life but it was also dangerous and urgent. It is hard to describe the feeling of those times. While World War II was progressively decimating Europe in the north, we in Palestine could feel Hitler's presence steadily creeping closer and closer to our small infant state. The Palmach, the elite forces of the Haganah, formed us into small highly mobile units that could be armed and come together or disperse upon short notice. In the event of an invasion we would hide out in the hills and attack the Nazis.

By 1947, after the war, Palestine was galloping toward statehood at a manic pace. We were organized and we were disorganized. As the various groups and agencies positioned themselves in preparation for statehood, they cooperated beautifully with each other on some matters and on other matters sliced and hacked away at each other mercilessly due to bitter seemingly irreconcilable internal factional wars that erupted every step of the way. Life was full of contradictions and things that made absolutely no sense. For example, we actively sabotaged the British at the same time we worked side by side with them.

I traveled to Prague, Czechoslovakia to purchase four little airplanes. The Jewish Agency and the Haganah smuggled money into Prague and I met the pilots at the airplane factory. Each pilot flew his airplane in short hops from one small airport to another until we arrived at a hidden airport in Palestine. Each

time we landed we camouflaged the airplanes by painting them a different color according to what country we were in.

In both Prague and Switzerland we created financial arrangements in which those hopeful to immigrate to Palestine secretly gave their money to the Jewish Agency as a kind of a loan, before it was confiscated by their governments. We promised to return their money with interest when they arrived, if they arrived, in Palestine. Meanwhile the Jewish Agency used the funds to facilitate legal and illegal immigration, buy arms and supplies to fight the British and strengthen the infrastructure of what would become an independent State of Israel.

When Israel became an independent State in 1948, I was living in Switzerland. I was there to coordinate a variety of efforts related to immigration, finance, arms sales, the relocation of refugee children, and even attended a meeting of the young United Nations as a representative of the Kibbutz Movement. Everyone, including myself, attended under the pretense of being journalists, but we were all spies, learning as much as we could about foreign countries and building diplomatic relations. I met people from India, Africa, South America and Asia. We were strange to each other. I had never met Indians, Africans or South Americans and many of them had never met Jews.

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KIBBUTZ DAHLIA, 1949

If we were in good economic condition, we got new shoes twice a year, sandals in summer and full size shoes for winter. There was a ceremony when the shoes were ready and my class was invited to get their shoes. First the boys then the girls, sometimes all the same color. The uniformity of everything created a feeling of equality that no one felt he or she had less than someone else.

Once I got my new shoes and they were terrible. They didn't fit. I went to my mother sobbing. "These shoes are terrible. They hurt my feet. They press on my legs." I begged her to please go with me to the shoemaker and tell him!" In the beginning my mother was afraid. She said, "No, no, I cannot take you." I cried so much that her heart finally softened and she explained to the shoemaker that the shoes make her little daughter cry. His answer was, "Never mind, in a while her foot will adapt to the shoe."

Ofra Yahalom, of her childhood growing up on a Kibbutz

The Central Committee ordered me to the Kibbutz Merchaviah for an important meeting. Merchaviah sat in a magnificent valley in Israel. The Committee arranged for a trucker to pick me up the next morning.

"Too many children arriving in Palestine have serious psychological problems and need treatment before they can be placed in a home or a Kibbutz. We need someone who can develop programs to help these children. We thought of you and wondered if you are interested in going to London for one or two years and studying with Anna Freud? We would arrange everything for you. The Central Committee has all the power to make this happen, but as you know, you cannot leave without approval from the members of the Kibbutz. Itamar, are you interested?"

The members of Kibbutz Dahlia called a meeting to discuss whether or not to let me go. Judith and I showered and dressed and were beside ourselves with

excitement. We eagerly rushed to the meeting hall fully expecting our friends to be equally excited about our good news. As we entered the big meeting room, the averted stares and hushed sideways conversations turned our jubilation into a foreboding that turned to bitterness. They weren't going to let me go.

We sat through a whole evening of what felt like a series of betrayals. Each member explained their reasons one after another. They all said the same thing. The vote came late in the night.

"Itamar is traveling all the time. How can a Kibbutz have a member who lives outside of the Kibbutz? You are here only every second or third day and two whole years you lived in Switzerland! You've traveled enough."

"We appreciate how much Itamar has done and sacrificed for the Kibbutz, for the movement and for the State. You were chosen to travel in Europe. You risked your life many times and did important things. You worked in Tel Aviv and made important connections with the banks for us. But now we need you here. We will not vote to let you leave again for another two years."

"In ten years, you've really only lived here five. Can the spirit of the Kibbutz life be kept alive in a man who is not working the land, except on a rare Saturday? It is not that we can't run the Kibbutz without you. It's for your sake!"

They asked for my reaction.

"I have waited for an opportunity like this for years. To be denied this chance to study at the Anna Freud Clinic is like having my dreams murdered. I will not accept your 'No' decision, especially after the Central Committee chose

me and made me the offer. Despite all your expressions of admiration and praise I have no choice but to leave the Kibbutz. If you won't let me go to London, I'll go on my own. Judith and I can accumulate the money ourselves. I will go! Your decision will not stop me. This is my chance to study with one of the most brilliant and progressive child psychoanalysts of our time. I will go with or without your approval!"

Some people left crying. Judith and I left, hiding our tears. Back in our small room she dared to ask me, "Do you really want to leave the Kibbutz?" Without really thinking I said, "No". I asked her and she said, "No". "So why are we preparing to leave tomorrow?"

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Our two beds were placed on the back of a truck. We climbed into the front seat and were gone. We stored the beds in Tel Aviv, the driver wished us well and drove away. There we were: two people who survived Hitler's Germany and lived a good part of their lives on the Kibbutz, standing out in the street with five pounds each that equaled roughly five American dollars.

We looked at each other and communicated without speaking. Is this what we wanted? Somewhere in the silence we knew to head in the direction of my sister's house in Tel Aviv.

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We walked a great distance to get to the bus. As it made its way through the crowded and busy streets of Tel Aviv to where they lived, I remembered that my sister never liked that we lived on the Kibbutz. She would be elated. When we arrived, my brother-in-law was already at work. My sister would be leaving shortly.

"You left the Kibbutz! I can hardly believe it. I am filled with happiness! Take anything you need. We'll all have a dinner together and celebrate this wonderful turn of events."

Once she and her jubilation were gone, a thick silence filled the small apartment. What had we done? Is this what we want? Do we want to go back? They'd surely be angry with us but they'd give us our old room back, even if they had already assigned it to a new couple. They would surely accept us back.

Something very decisive and powerful rose up in opposition to the rubbery uncertainty of our previous doubt and despair. We decided to stay. What was it that made me leave? Was it my inability to swallow their insult? What in me revolted so strongly against their need to keep each of the members of the Kibbutz so tied to the Kibbutz? Was I disappointed by their lack of recognition of my devotion, obedience and hard work and all I had given up for the them and the movement? Was I no longer willing to follow orders and be the good obedient soldier at such a sacrifice to my own being? Why did I have to punish myself and

the Kibbutz? I had no answers to these questions.

This was before I was psychoanalyzed and before I came to understand the nature of the unconscious. I am sure I was influenced by my years in Germany seeing so many people refusing to be rescued from Hitler, not wanting to leave their comfortable but soon to be extinct lives in Germany for the snakes and scorpions of Palestine.

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TEL AVIV, 1949

Judith and I never had money of our own on the Kibbutz, but we never felt poor. In fact, we felt rich. But we were a unit of two now. We couldn't walk into the communal dining room and grab a piece of bread or a tomato. We needed our own jobs if we were to eat.

We decided I would take the bus to Jerusalem in the morning and visit the offices of the Jewish Agency, the same Jewish Agency that had made it possible for my family to leave Konskovola and come to Palestine. The man I needed to see was out so I dropped by the offices of the Youth Aliyah, an organization that had helped desperate parents send their children out of Germany. "Aliyah" means the movement to come to Israel. Aliyah is to climb up, so to come to Israel is to climb up to a higher level, to a better life. Youth Aliyah funded and

organized the transport and care of German children to Palestine without their parents. The Youth Aliyah eventually aided children from not only Germany but all over the world during and after the war.

"Itamar! What are you doing here?" Surprised to hear my name spoken by a familiar but as yet unidentifiable voice, I looked in the direction of the sound and saw my old friend from the Kibbutz movement, Mr. Kohl. "What are you doing here, Itamar?" I was thinking: What are you doing here, Kohl?

I was so ashamed to tell him I had left the Kibbutz. We knew each other from the days when I was knocking on everybody's door to secure loans for Kibbutz Dahlia, from the days when we were all improvising and wheeling and dealing. I now felt naked in front of him, like a man stripped of his rank and maybe even of his very skin. I felt I had nothing to show for my life.

"What are you planning to do in Tel Aviv?" he said, realizing that his first question hadn't met with a response. I meekly showed him the four pounds and the bus ticket, like a child shows a parent two or three pennies that is his change from a small errand.

"All I know is that I am standing here. I don't know what I'll do tomorrow. I know about loans and banking. Maybe I'll go to a bank and ask for a job."

"No!" he said emphatically. "Tomorrow you will work here. You came to me! You will work for me. Tomorrow I will give you a job supervising the relocation of refugee children coming into Israel, especially the ones that are difficult to place." He pulled me by the sleeve and took me over to the secretary.

I felt I was dreaming.

"Is Judith here too? How is she? Where are you staying, Itamar?"

"With my sister. We don't have a place yet", I said in a daze.

He reached into his pocket. "Here's ten pounds, my old friend, an advance on your salary. Go rent a small room somewhere for the two of you and come back tomorrow."

I returned to my sister's and showed Judith the ten pounds. "I have a job, a good job, and working with children!" She could hardly believe it. We should have been excited but we were both in a state of unreality.

And so I began working for the Youth Aliyah, finding homes for refugee children. I made arrangements with the Kibbutzim to take thirty or forty children each. In exchange they received money from the Jewish Agency. Private families took children as well. We never saved enough money to study in London, but soon after starting at Youth Aliya, I went to work for Henrietta Szold, a philanthropist who created farms and schools to treat and educate severely disturbed children arriving in Israel from the war.

Judith and I weren't used to having our own money and for the first time in our lives, we rented our own little room. Even though we shared the kitchen and bathroom with at least two other couples, for us, this was luxury.

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THE JERUSALEM PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY
1951

The vote at Dahlia destroyed my second opportunity to study in London. I turned to the displaced professors and psychoanalysts who fled to Palestine during and after the war, for dialogue and stimulation. Ten or eleven of these men had come together and formed the Jerusalem Psychoanalytic Society. They insisted on holding their meetings in German, keeping a close connection to the language of Freud, the root language of their discipline.

Most had been analyzed by Freud and had been members of psychoanalytic groups in Vienna, Budapest, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. They offered me a place to learn. I applied for formal training around 1951. Even then, as today, psychoanalysis was expensive. When I found out how much it would cost me, Judith and I realized our "luxurious" living would soon be pinched.

The man who supervised my formal training, Dr. Wolf, was a professor of neurology at a large institution in Odessa, Russia, under the communist system. In those days there were no psychiatrists, only neurologists. He discovered Freud after the Russian Revolution and traveled to Vienna to meet him. Since Wolf was an important neurologist from a foreign country, Freud was more than happy to meet with him.

Wolf expressed a desire to be analyzed by Freud and Freud wanted to analyze Wolf, but they both knew it was a long distance between Odessa and

Vienna, so they worked out an arrangement. Twice a month, Wolf traveled from Odessa and spent Friday to Sunday afternoon with Freud. They walked together in a nearby park, four hours at a time, and that is how they conducted the analysis. When it became clear that Wolf had to leave Russia or be killed, he slipped away to Palestine after one of his visits to Freud. He never went back.

There were no formal classes at the Jerusalem Psychoanalytic Society. Your supervisor, directed your studies and suggested what to read and so on. The core of your training was in your personal psychoanalysis. It was the same system Freud established.

Psychoanalytic ideas were catalysts of tremendous excitement and discussion in the 1950's. There was a feeling that a huge advancement in our understanding of the human mind had occurred. Some believed that psychoanalysis promised a way to strengthen civilization and reduce the irrationality and primitive conflicts between individuals and even nations. Dr. Wolf told me numerous personal stories as his way of introducing me to the fascinating and then revolutionary study of psychoanalysis. Maybe I got some of my teaching style from him and of course from my mother, who gave me the very first stories and songs I ever heard.

Studying with Wolf was informal and relaxed. We spoke Hebrew together rather than the more formal German. We weren't strangers either, since we had worked together in the Kibbutz movement. When a child had difficulties we couldn't handle by ourselves, we called him. He was a kind of consultant.

One of the more rebellious analysts in the Institute, Dr. Barak, was my psychoanalyst. He came to Palestine by way of Switzerland and was considered a revolutionary because he suggested changes in the autocratic methodology of psychoanalysis.

The members of the Institute had learned you could not make changes. Even though Palestine had been liberated from the British in 1948, Israeli psychoanalysis still operated under the rigid and heavy hand of the British Psychoanalytic Society. The members felt helpless. There they were, highly educated men from all over Europe, refugees from ruthless dictators and anti-Semitism, finding themselves intellectually constrained and bowing in submission to the despotic leadership of not only the British Psychoanalytic Society but also the International Psychoanalytic Association.

I would question things once or twice. The third time I learned to stop asking. Someone would tell me: "If you want to stay here, stop asking." There was no shame about this. Everyone accepted that's just the way it was.

Psychoanalysis has struggled with this tension from the beginning, as have other disciplines. I refer to the problem that occurs when the creative excitement and power of highly intelligent people changes into rigidity and destructive competitiveness. They use their positions of power to evoke panic and humiliation in their colleagues. I would describe it as an unconscious pressure that builds up in some brilliant creative people that stifles creative thinking in others and often destroys harmonious and mutual rhythms between

colleagues as well as between analysts and their patients. It was in such an environment that I began my studies, flanked on one side by the thrill of discovery and learning, and flanked on the other side by an uncomfortable sense of restriction and oppression.

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My psychoanalytic sessions with Barak took place in a room in his house. They were part of his daily family life. As was the custom I would lay down on the couch. Often, in the middle of a session, his little son would call from the other room in Hebrew: "Papa, papa, my sister hits me!" He would excuse himself saying: "There is a fight between my children. I have to... " and leave the room for a short while. Upon his return we resumed our session.

Once he received a phone call and excused himself. He said he had to take care of an emergency down the street. The police had called him to talk down a woman who wouldn't leave the stairwell of her house because she believed someone was waiting to kill her at the bottom of the stairs. It was several hours before he returned.

One particular day he shook my hand and asked me to sit down at the table with him instead of lying on the couch. As I said, he was already seen as a kind of revolutionary or maverick. We were quite far into the analysis and I didn't know what to expect.

"You know Itamar, we are done with our analysis."

"What, you never told me this ..."

"I couldn't bring it up because I have to comply with Ernest Jones who is the President of the International Psychoanalytic Association. You have to complete so many hours of psychoanalysis to become a member of the Society and you're about 50 hours short. They won't approve your membership if you have even one hour less. You have a lot to offer me. So I have a proposal for you. You know a lot of things from your experiences on the Kibbutz and with the youth movement. You can teach me. That's how we'll finish up our last hours." I was a bit confused by this sudden termination, but I agreed to his plan. I never worked up the courage to ask why I needed to pay him if now I was the teacher.

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When I completed my training, Wolf and Barak sent their letters of recommendation for my graduation to London for approval. We threw a big party at the Institute. Wolf came in pale. He had been in communication with the British Psychoanalytic Society. Its president, Ernest Jones, (who was also President of the International Association) had just made an agreement with the American Psychoanalytic Association, giving American physicians a monopoly over the practice of psychoanalysis. This meant that the large numbers of non-medical doctors practicing psychoanalysis, known in Europe as "lay analysts",

would be barred from becoming psychoanalysts and members of the International Psychoanalytic Association. He would not make an exception for Jerusalem's most recent graduate, Itamar Yahalom.

Wolf called the group together. I sneered at them: "Does this make sense to you? Are you going to accept that just because a deal was struck with the Americans that I am to be rejected the day after I finished?" Wolf said: "No Itamar, it makes no sense. Psychoanalysis has its strange ways and this is one of them. You should go. There's nothing more for you in Palestine. Even though the American Psychoanalytic Association will exclude you, as did the International Association, from what I hear and read there are all kinds of opportunities for a bright guy like you in the United States."

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ISRAEL

1954

Dr. Newborg arrived in Israel in perfect counterpoint to my devastating disappointment with the Jerusalem Psychoanalytic Institute. I was like a dejected child grounded on a seesaw with no playmate. The far end sat high in the air, unoccupied. He jumped on that seesaw with me and offered me a ticket right out of the playground.

Dr. Newborg represented the Hadassah, an American Jewish charity

organization. Hadassah knew Israel desperately needed trained professionals. He was here to offer someone a one year research fellowship to study at Columbia University in New York. His sister knew me from Kibbutz Dahlia and told her brother: "There is a man, Itamar Yahalom. He's an analyst!" He contacted me in Tel Aviv.

He offered me a chance to study in the United States for a whole year. I would do research with preschool children and get paid $250 a month. I had to ask around if that amount of money was a good or a bad thing. An American couple we knew said if we were careful we could easily both live on that amount. I asked Newborg if I could bring my wife. He agreed but warned me that she wouldn't be able to work.

Judith, however, was very resourceful. She spoke fluent Hebrew and German and was trained as a nurse on the Kibbutz. She quickly earned money under the table, baby sitting for the wealthier German American immigrants in New York City. Our combined incomes made for an excellent salary. We saved a little money. We made friends. We went to movies and lived well. The year we lived in New York City was full of excitement and new experiences. It took our imaginations beyond anything we could have dreamed of.

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As part of my fellowship I traveled to Chicago and met the famous Dr.

Bruno Bettelheim. His work with disturbed children had received international attention and I was very interested in his school at the University of Chicago. I stayed two weeks even though I was only sent for a few days. He showed me the facility where he treated the children and we talked about his approach to treatment. I told him how we relocated thousands of children after the war and the types of problems we encountered. We made a very good connection. What I didn't know then was that in two years I would return to the United States and work as his research assistant.

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Before we returned to Israel, we took a vacation. We had never taken a vacation before and Judith wanted to see Italy. By the time we left, we had saved enough money to travel modestly as tourists, not as refugees or spies. We took two months and gave ourselves a trip to Europe.

When we visited Milan and Naples I thought to myself: I finally made it to Italy. We even bought a refrigerator, not a new one but second hand one, and returned to Israel with our previous jobs waiting for us, money in our pockets and a second hand refrigerator. People in Israel didn't have refrigerators. We felt like the luckiest people in the world.

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ISRAEL

1956

Sometime in 1956 two men from the University of Chicago arrived in Israel with a message from Dr. Bettelheim. "We'd like to offer you a job as Dr. Bettelheim's research assistant at the University of Chicago. You will work and do research at his school for severely disturbed children, teach at the University and earn your degree."

I asked my friends if I should go. "Should I leave my whole life in Israel and live in the United States?" They said: "You are crazy to hesitate even one second. Go! Go! This is the chance of a lifetime. This is the great Dr. Bettelheim! This is the famous University of Chicago!" Here was my chance to attend a large University and finally get my credentials. The opportunity was being handed to me on a banquet platter.

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PART 3

Chicago, 1956

uprooted and replanted

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1956

The Orthogenic School for Severely Disturbed Children at the University of Chicago was housed in a solid two story, square, elegant old building on a street lined with huge overhanging trees. Once you made your way up the stone front steps and walked through the large heavy entrance door and down the hall and into the children's area, you found yourself in an entirely different slice of the universe than the hustle and bustle of young people attending classes and the serious business of university life.

Your normal sense of time, space and how people communicate evaporated when you first entered the children's area. Each child lived in a dimension shaped by their own private sense of time, some speeding up time as if an urgent matter needed their immediate attention and some slowing it down as though they had just swallowed a piece of eternity.

Many children talked with their hands, expressing excitement, frustration, discovery and fright. Some children seemed fixed in space as if comfortably seated in their own private home entertainment center. Others noticeably immersed in play repeated the same gesture or behavior over and over again.

No parents entered this sacred children's space. This was 1956 and parents were thought to have caused their children's deviations and lack of fit into the world. Dr. Bettelheim believed these children could be helped by taking them away from their families and given a superior environment in which to

discover their own way back to the world. He and I fought bitterly over this very issue. Years later when I created my own day treatment programs for disturbed children in both Chicago and Los Angeles, we did not assume parents were to blame. We encouraged and taught them how to become a part of the treatment process.

I was in heaven at the University. I had found the perfect life for me. I taught classes to the undergraduate students. I worked at the Orthogenic School. I took classes. The excitement and stimulation of the University was intoxicating. It was the drink that quenched my thirst.

At the same time, Judith and I were struggling financially. Salaries were impossibly small and just the rent for an apartment took our entire income. Dr. Korman, a psychiatrist who had become a good friend at the University, suggested I see a few private clients. Within a matter of months, he had referred me enough clients to double my salary. One more time, we had escaped catastrophe and found a wonderful new life that fit us perfectly. Konskovola, Jerusalem, Germany, Dahlia, Tel Aviv, New York... We left them all behind. I was now fulfilling my dream to study at a great University and earning a good living for my wife and I.

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THE WILLOW FARM

I was on the family willow farm... my grandmother's family grew Willow Trees for making baskets... and I was staying at the family farm house... and I was outside with an uncle... and I saw a row of Willow Trees with rusty wire hanging between them.

So I said to my uncle: "Why is that rusty wire hanging between those trees?"

And he said: "Um... well... we made a fence out of willow stakes and the fence came to life."

And I looked... and of course then I could see that each of these was like... you could see how each had been a fence post... and these wooden posts had formed shoots and roots and it wasn't a fence anymore. It was a row of living trees. And this made... uh... you know really... a tremendous impression on me... because this sense of the dead things coming to life in such a vivid way... you could directly see.

The whole thing lasting only maybe 10, 20, 50 seconds. I don't know how long the sense of it lasted. But when I remembered it... this particularly vivid incident... I then saw both to my surprise and delight... and also to some extent horror... that in this childhood memory was summarized much of my subsequent scientific career.

Dr. Rupert Sheldrake

CHAD

One evening, I had a call from a man. *"I want to see you because I have a question."* An peculiar almost hollow sound in his voice told me this was not a normal patient. I knew I couldn't ask him anything about himself. *"I have a question I wanted to ask many people but didn't. I inquired from people who know you or who know about you and I came to the conclusion that you are the man who is able to understand my question."*

His language combined Russian, German, Hebrew and Jewish words. It took a great effort to understand him. The charged but deliberately deadened tone of his voice felt like the air before an electrical storm. I said only, "Can you come Thursday or Friday?", and looking at my watch, "Can you come at five o'clock?" He said: *"Yes"*. I said: "...at five o'clock". It had been a quarter to five when he called .

As the thunder rumbled closer and broke inside my head, I was flooded with images. I had just made an appointment with a ghost not a person. Only afterwards I realized my mind had been frozen as if caught in a icy wind. I registered his *"Yes"* to my question: "Do you know where my office is?" but his "*Yes*" also contained: *"How can you ask such a question?"*. I said: "I will see you at that hour." He said: *"Yes"* again and hung up the phone.

I began to think about my experience. Did I really hear him speak all those different languages? How could I so easily discard the usual questions I ask a new patient? I didn't even ask, "Who referred you?" I didn't ask one single

question including, "When is a good time for you to come?" I looked at my watch to see what time it was and gave him that time of the day. I puzzled more about myself than about him. I had never acted like this before. I thought, I'll learn more when we meet.

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He arrived exactly on time. He must have waited somewhere outside. He sat on the chair, reluctantly, at the very edge. I was amazed when I looked at him. How can he sit like that and not fall? He barely touched the front two inches of the chair, half standing half sitting. I looked straight at him. He was a very... I would say a very little guy. I began to form a picture of him. What or who is this sitting in front of me.

I felt tense. I felt ready to stretch out my hand at any moment to prevent him from falling, but he seemed stable. He stared at the corner, not at me, and said: *"You don't know me. It's for a long time I'm looking for a man who will be able to answer my question".* I had to control myself because he repeated it a few times. I wanted to ask, "What's your question!" but I was silenced by an injunction against movement in my body that knew I shouldn't interrupt him. I shouldn't ask a question. I felt again in the presence of a ghost. Not a ghost that frightens but a ghost that touches you as it passes by. So I sat in my own way and listened.

He continued: *"I inquired about you from many people who know you and I was sure and am sure that you are the man who will answer my question".* I was ready... okay... here comes the question. But he didn't talk at all about the question. He went on: *"You see me now as a little man and no I was a tall man with strong shoulders. Immediately when they saw me they took me and said go there and put me in where they worked with metal sheets."* He never explained. He took it for granted that I knew what he meant.

By this time wild speculations were flying around and landing inside my head. He didn't explain anything but a picture was forming in my mind. *"They selected only the strongest people and I worked there and I was good. One of the best workers and worked hard".* And then suddenly he stood up. The session was over. Nothing more came out of him but a long silence with him not looking at me as you might look at me, but looking somewhere through me, beyond me; like an autistic or schizophrenic person who looks through you because they are in their own mental world. But even if he had looked at me, I didn't feel that I was in the presence of a person who looks out at anyone.

He had been totally preoccupied with his story. He talked about *"that factory"* and *"carrying heavy metal sheets"* and described his *"strength"* and *"how much power he had".* I assumed he didn't know how long a session lasted, but he did. At exactly 50 minutes he stood up and left. I didn't want him to leave without making a next appointment so I said: "When do you want to come back?" He said: *"How about the same day at the same hour".* No he didn't use the word

same, he merely stated: “Thursday at five.” and I said “yes”.

He didn't say goodbye. He didn't make any motion to shake my hand, no movement, not a single unnecessary movement. He merely stood up and left. As I observed him moving, I realized that these were not the movements of a person who would ever shake your hand or who even moves his hands and his legs in such a way as to indicate there is a live being somewhere inside who is coordinating those movements.

He left and I was bombarded with feelings and with questions I couldn't answer. What prevented me from asking: "What's the question?" Somewhere inside I didn't feel I could. I didn't dare. I took it for granted he wanted to come. I didn't mention payment. I didn't talk to him about anything. What... who is he?

I wanted to write notes about him. His face wasn't strange, but his story was incomprehensible. A tall man with big muscles cannot shrink to half his size! He was really a very very small man. It was unbelievable. It was ridiculous. I had to push it away. “I'll see more next time.”

But next time was the same thing. He came in, sat on the same narrow edge of the chair, and after two or three minutes went on to describe the factory. He did it in the same way and yet not the same way. He described *"...the heavy, heavy sheets, the way of picking up and carrying these huge sheets of metal from one place to another, how strong he was, how he was the best worker..."* Session after session he repeated endlessly the story of what they are for and what he is doing. No explanations. It was like somebody describing thoughts

that have been printed on air, nothing, no solid ground for their existence.

He talked and talked like that for a very long time. I watched and listened carefully. He repeats the story week after week but he doesn't repeat it exactly. I tried to discover what it was he changed? For example, now when the end of the hour came, he went out and said: *"I will see you next time,"* and he also said the hour and the date. We went on like this for many hours, many months, exactly in the same repetitive monotonous way, until I started to feel restless and uncomfortable and awkward. I didn't know what he was doing, if he was doing anything.

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THE FIFTY MINUTE CIRCLE

Every time I had a free hour in the evening I thought about him. I thought, I shouldn't touch this man. I can't push this guy. I have to let him tell his story at his own pace. His hour became a kind of sacred space we occupied together each week. Week after week he came and talked about the factory. He didn't repeat the exact same words each week but he repeated the whole idea over and over again.

I started to see it as a circle. He comes in and he has a circle that he walks around and it fits exactly 50 minutes. Sometimes he used a different order but it

was the same story: *"the metal sheets were heavy..."* He described a *"heavy weight"* but never in any way complained or expressed new feelings or any other new idea. I didn't say a word, didn't ask a question.

Out of the blue, one day, he asked: *"Do you think you know the answer to my question?"* I was flabbergasted. This was the first time he broke the circle but what is the damn question?. *"Do you think... do you know the answer?"* And out of nowhere he began throwing in bits of phrases that referred to what felt like some *"...ghostly society... that meets... and talks... at night..."* but he didn't tell me who or when. Once more I felt my mind short circuit and unable to think.

I grabbed firmly onto myself and responded swiftly to his question: "You know, I begin to think I understand your question but I'm not sure. And as I am not sure I cannot tell you that I have an answer." I didn't tell him: I don't understand your question, I don't even know what your question is. I knew I shouldn't say that to him. I played my hand with a bluff... like I dealt with an unconscious set of cards. That was the only remark that I made to him.

He said, *"You are right. A lot of things I didn't tell you because I don't remember"* and he started to talk. He said: *"How can I remember? I don't remember."* And he started to repeat: *"I don't remember"* and *"I cannot remember"*. This was the new edge of the circumference of the circle on which he traveled.

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I continued to listen without asking anything. Then came the first one. We met for seven years. I asked him maybe 10 questions. This was the first one I remember. "You told me you inquired about me, who I am. With whom did you discuss it?" Without moving his body or turning toward me with any expression of feeling, he answered me. *"You know you shouldn't ask questions if you want me to come."* And I didn't try to defend myself. I left it.

"I think I remember because every week we... we meet and we all tell to each other or to the whole group, our story". Once again you can imagine how I was overwhelmed by questions. Who is *"we"*? Who *"meets"*? What is this *"story"*? *"We meet and we tell each other... each person..."*. I can't repeat his words exactly... I forget... but I understood what he was saying, that he: *"...sits with people and each one tells their story... every week..."* There were many hours of going over just that. That was what he remembered. Like a tree that grows in circumference one ring at a time. He had added one more ring.

He warned me not to ask him questions if I want him to come and I had to struggle to not ask questions because I wanted him to come. I guessed he carried memories that he both remembered and didn't remember, but in the beginning I thought it was kind of an imaginary drama that was going on inside of him. Slowly I realized there really was a group, they were like partners or members of a club.

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"There are a lot... a few people who..." and when he started to say: *"...we meet and we tell...",* I started to repeat a few of his words, not very loudly, but in his economical quiet way. I said: "... and I started to tell our story and spoke..." and he looked at me... terrified! He said, *"What did you say?"* I said, "I said what I heard you saying, that you repeat this story." He said: *"We repeat the story every week and I came here..."* I had to use all my self-control not to ask: "Who is we? What is this story?" but I kept silent, remembering his warning. It was a warning that said: *"You do that again, nothing will happen!"*

Again and again, I gently interrupted his repetitions by repeating his words and imitating his sound. Then one day, within his usual circle of repetitions, he added part of my first question. *"I inquired and they told me that you lived with them and you speak German and you speak English and you speak Hebrew and you understand Jewish and you speak Russian and you understand Russian and you speak..."* He spoke in that charged but deadened way: *"... and you speak Polish, and understand Polish, and he told me you lived with them. You know them better than anybody in the world".*

He took us back to the first hour and my first question but there was no feeling of recognition, of return. He just gave it to me as if it was new in the moment, as if I had never asked him a question about it at a prior time. His language didn't use any words that connected us in time.

I want you to understand my confusion, my questioning. He acted like a clock that ticks past the end of an hour with indifference. He stood up slowly,

never saying anything that would indicate he registered some sort of change. Nothing. He stood up, didn't look back at me, and walked out.

I spent a long time trying to construct a meaning out of what he added in this hour: *"I inquired... and they told me about you... "* And the major thing: *"...that I lived with them and I know languages, therefore I will understand his question."*

It took months for us to make the framework, the container in which to put this new piece. I knew where it belonged immediately. Germany, so it is that I lived in Germany. But why did I have to know languages? To that I had no answer, nothing was fastened down. Now that new material had been added to our fragile house of cards there was a new danger. Touching any one piece could demolish the entire structure.

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CONTACT

Behind the particular, visible
shapes of matter must lie ghostly,
invisible forms in motion. Plato

He communicated a lot to me, and not just through words. But every moment of understanding sprouted an endless number of new questions. And of course I didn't know the basic thing: What was *"the question"*? He never mentioned that.

One day I realized *"the steel factory"* and *"the heavy metal sheets"* had disappeared from his conversation. Now he talked about how *"...every week we tell the story. We have to tell the same story. We shouldn't make a mistake. Everybody is there and listening and if a word we say is wrong they look and then we go back and say it in the way that..."* He explained how they have agreed to say the same story in exactly the same words every week. Sometimes I thought he must be exaggerating, but he repeated it many times. Every one of his repetitions built up something inside of me that existed somewhere for him. This went on for another period of hours, over many, many months.

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Then came time for my summer vacation.

"Every year I go on vacation. I won't be here for four weeks."

"Oh I know, I know."

I looked at him in disbelief, feeling hypnotized when I was with him.

"They told me that you will be away and I know that you go away for four weeks. Next week...", he then counted as if he was reading off of a calendar in his head: *"...this and this and this and then you will be back"*, and he gave me the date. He knew the dates. Then he stood up and left.

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I had four whole weeks to think about him. I speculated, based on hearing, although not from him, that survivors from the concentration camps often built small groups and told each other stories from their concentration camp but never the true story. Each one built a story of his living there that was completely different from the reality of the concentration camp. And all the others listened and they learned that story and stayed with that story for a long time. So I had a suspicion that it might be such a group. I had enough hints from him for weeks.

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I came back and was eager to see how he would start. I knew there was someone in there. He sat down on that same thin edge of chair, and started to talk exactly where he left off four weeks earlier. *"I tell my story every week. Everyone has to tell his story in that evening before we end. I tell my story and... "* I looked at him in amazement as he said: *"...my story is the story I told you here. The story of how I worked in that factory. You knew that it wasn't true. You listened to me very well, but you knew that it wasn't true. You knew that I wasn't such a strong man and... but they... every time when we tell the story... everybody believes it."* Here was his explanation. He believes their story, they believe his story. *"But you knew that I wasn't a big strong man,* and *you didn't ask me."* I said: "I don't want to interfere. I want to reach a point where I can understand your question." Now, for the first time since we began, I brought in

that there is a question I want to understand.

"Do you want me to speak only in English?" he said, ignoring my reference to his question. "I want you to talk in whatever way you can to tell me what you want to tell me". Then he got irritated with me as though he had sprung a tiny leak in his otherwise perfectly seamless shell. *"I'll tell you what I want to tell you. I've told you something that I am not supposed to tell... what we tell the group. We tell the story one way... with no changes... and nobody should know."*

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The following week I asked: "You know we have undertaken a very difficult task. One hour a week is not enough for us to understand what we are doing here." I stressed "we", to make the difference between "our we" and his group.

He accepted it immediately. *"I know what we are doing is not to tell the same story every evening, I know. We will meet twice a week."* And even though I was ready, I wasn't ready for him to agree to it so quickly. By now I realized that he was working somewhere and that he finished somewhere around four. So I suggested a second day at the same time. He said: *"Yes".*

I introduced a change and he accepted it. Working now two hours a week, a new ring formed on the periphery of our circle. We inhabited a slightly different space together now, an area in which he *"...didn't have to tell the same story",* and in which *"...we were doing something different"*. We were really looking for

the question.

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THE INTERROGATION

The Midrash, on the Creation of the Child, relates that after its guardian angel has given it a fillip upon the nose, the newborn child forgets all the infinite knowledge acquired before its birth in the celestial houses of learning. But why, Eleazar asks, does the child forget? "Because if it did not forget, the course of this world would drive it to madness if it thought about it in the light of what it knew.

After we established this new understanding, he never mentioned the group again. He started asking me questions. At first, I thought I needed to give him sensible answers. But that wasn't what he was looking for. That wasn't what this was about. These were his questions.

"Do you know what a concentration camp is?"

I said: "Yes".

"Do you know how they gas people?"

I said: "Yes."

"Do you know this... Do you know that..." he asked and he asked. *"Do you know how the people come in, into the gas chamber?"*

"No. I have never been there. I saw the camps after but not..." I said: "No, I don't know".

"Do you know how they come out from the gas chamber?"

I said: "No, I don't know."

"Do you know what they do with them after they come out?"

"No, I don't know."

One after the other he asked me these questions. Because I didn't know I answered: "No, I don't know." He said: *"Do you know that the shoes have to fit, the right and the left have to be together and not mixed up?"* I said: "No, I don't know." All the answers that I didn't know I said: "No, I don't know". He asked endless questions. *"Do you know that the gold teeth have to be pulled out and put on a place?"* I said: "No, I don't know."

Hours and hours and hours of these same questions. I couldn't believe it. You wouldn't. No human being could believe or realize that he was involved in all that. He knew exactly, he gave me the information in questions rather than telling it to me. *"Do you know this... and that..."* in detail. If I hadn't been intensely curious about this man and what he was communicating to me, glued, almost mesmerized by every word and every question he asked, I would have thrown him out.

I can't describe the feeling of being with him through all that. The endless repetitions and the content were almost intolerable to me. He asked and asked and one day I said: "You must know how it was done." His head jerked up and he looked right at me. He glared at me with a glare that was half begging and half scowling. *"I told you that you shouldn't ask questions."* I hadn't asked a

question, but for him it was a question. I just waited for the next round.

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Then one day, looking me straight in the face, like a regular human being, he said: *"I was there..."* with a terrible fear in his eyes and with a terrible fear of me. What comes after this I thought?

"I was there. I did it all. Do you know that there are three people or four who are there when the people come out?" "No, I don't know."

"You have to know to put the shoes in a place... you have to take out the teeth..." and he described the process for me again, this terrible process. *"...how you take from the people ...you have to put it right... and the brown shoes shouldn't be mixed up with black shoes... three or four are there when the people come out."* When he talked about the people he talked about them in a blank mechanical way. And of course whenever I had to answer I said: "No, I don't know." I would sit there thinking: "Are there people in this world who know that?"

I distracted myself with extraneous thoughts while this was going on, because it was too much. Now I was reciting endless repetitions of: "No, I don't know", "No, I don't know," because if I would have said "Yes," I would have destroyed his whole system, his whole method, his rhythm.

I had a hard time tolerating the enormous amount of detail. I succeeded

because it was 50 minutes, because I knew that in 50 minutes it would end. That was my system, my method, my rhythm. I had a clock and a watch. Although there was a clock on the wall directly in his line of vision, I never saw him look at it. These questions repeated themselves many times. It was a long period of time before he finished with them.

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On the THIRD DAY GOD
divided the FIRMAMENT
between HEAVEN and EARTH
and sent HIS BREATH out
Across the WATERS ***Genesis***

Come from the FOUR WINDS, O BREATH,
And breathe upon these slain
that they may live.

Then came my second question. "Don't you want to tell me something different, but you can't... " I chose my words carefully. " ...and therefore you repeat the same questions?" He said: *"I know that I repeat the same questions. I cannot tell you more."* And a third question, "Why not?" whispered softly in my mind but I didn't dare speak another word. I just looked at him for a long, long time.

I have no idea how long we sat that way. For us it was unusual to have such a long silence. After a while, with absolutely no emotion he spoke. *"...one*

morning they took the three people away from me and in the evening they came out dead." No. He never used the word dead. He said: ***"They came out... and I had to take their shoes... I had to take and put them... and put them on the... People were there..... were there..."*** meaning three new people appeared to work with him. And then I said: "This is part of your question. Why did they take the three and not you?"

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ONE IS THE STARS, TWO IS THE MOON

The Doctor

Now he brought in even more. ***"I was strong and I ate good food".*** When he told me what he was eating it made me wonder. He continued: ***"You know at night... when the moon was shining... the doctor came".*** And I was curious to know "Who's the doctor?" ***"The doctor came... and he brought me a lot of food... and I kept it there... he brought me milk..."*** And again I wondered if part of this was made up and if part of it was true: ***"...and he stayed with me til I fell asleep".***

I started to build up a story in my mind... that there was a doctor somewhere, either real or unreal... that it was a kind of memory of a mother... and that ***"...he brought me a lot of food and I ate".*** It didn't sound real but I accepted

it.

Now he spent hours describing how *"...the doctor brought me food... the doctor brought me food and I looked at the moon and then the doctor left when I was asleep".* This story did and didn't make sense. *"I had food. I got stronger and I wasn't tired... and the doctor..."* The doctor was some ideal person.

And then he related how the doctor told him stories. But he told me about the stories in an odd way. Listen to how he put it. *"The doctor came and I heard him talking about his visit..."* and for the first time he mentioned, *"...to Hitler. The doctor got a medal from Hitler."* He gave me a whole speech, what the doctor told Hitler and why he got a medal and how *"...he did surgery on Jewish men and Polish men and Russian men and Jewish women and Polish women and Russian women, and compared them..."* and what the whole research was about wasn't yet clear, *"...and Hitler gave him a medal for that".*

"Then the doctor came back and he heard that he has to go to Berlin and he will be away next week..." and here he made the first real connection between myself and the doctor: *"...like you were away four weeks".* It was as though my being gone for four weeks had created a bridge between the space we shared together and the memories of being with the doctor.

"When the doctor wasn't there a nurse came every night and brought me food. She brought me food. She brought me good food".

Hours and hours of *"...the doctor ...and the medal from Hitler ...and the good food... "* but nothing new. I had learned that I had to say something to

stimulate a new subject. "What about when there wasn't a moon?" I asked. He got pale. *"I told you not to ask questions."* I thought: "What was wrong in my question? I tried to correct it by saying: "There are nights that are dark." He ignored it completely.

I tried to imagine myself in his situation and think about it in a human way. I tried one more question: *"You slept in the dark too?"* He remained quiet for a long time and went on with his story. *"The doctor came. It was always dark. When the moon came out the doctor left."* He repeated the story of the doctor. *"He came and he held my face between his hands."* He described it like a mother. *"He undressed and he put his head on my face and then came the great good food. He shit into my mouth, it was warm and I fell asleep. When I woke up the doctor wasn't there."*

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Thus we arrived in a slow moving wide groove, like two old tired packhorses on an old familiar trail, round and round on the well trodden tale of the doctor and the nurse and the moon and the good food. I couldn't change anything until it finally shifted all by itself.

"The three were taken... they came out.. and three were there. We took their shoes... " .

After that his talking disintegrated into stories filled with crazy pictures.

His sentence structure fell apart, his different languages came back. For a period of time, he made no sense until one day he settled back into talking about the doctor and the order that he had to make with the shoes.

I wondered: "What happened to the new people? How did they know what to do?" He never mentioned talking, but there were a lot of things he didn't mention. So I dared to ask him another question with a little bit of dialogue:

"How did you know what you had to do? Did somebody tell you?"

"They couldn't tell me. They didn't know that I could talk. And they didn't know that I could hear... because I didn't hear.... and I didn't talk."

Then I put it together. He had become and acted completely like a deaf mute. But how did they know he would fulfill their orders if he couldn't talk or hear? How could they accept him as a deaf mute but see with their own eyes that everything was in perfect order? How does a deaf mute know how to do all that? It was too soon to ask.

So we continued on until he described a new shift: *"...the three were taken... three came out... "* He repeated the stories he heard from the doctor. The doctor could tell him those stories because he believed that he would never in his life tell them. He was completely accepted as a deaf mute. He heard the doctor say how *"...all these surgeries were completely unnecessary... it doesn't make a difference. I studied the sex organs of the Jews and of the Polish but it still doesn't make a difference but I went to Hitler and gave him prepared sheets of paper to show how different they are and got a medal."*

We went on like that, trudging round and round within the deep grooves of that well worn path, until he reached that critical moment in his internal rhythm when the new shift came in. This time he said: *"I looked... and I thought... next time will be me... ".*

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Is this partially the essence of his question? Why did they keep him alive?

The group he met with asked the same question. To live continually asking that question was hard for all of them, not just him. He had a thread of a reason: the doctor somehow needed him to survive.

How brilliant he was to adapt by being a deaf mute, to convince the environment without words that he could neither hear nor speak. What is that? How did he do that? Don't we all do it to some extent? Somewhere, the question hovers out there inside all of us: "What do we do in an impossible state?"

If you can, you become real crazy, and also not crazy. We send reality into oblivion. We lose a sense of time. That's an impossible state to describe. In some situations, we call people's behavior crazy. But if we take away the word crazy, and look for the meaning, don't we all make a lot of distortions inside of ourselves in order to survive?

He heard and spoke nothing and everything; and entertained terrifying conversations and questions in his own mind. The boundary between those two realities was blurred and involuntary. He accepted it. Thanks to that, he survived. Had he shrieked out one sentence or even one word in the presence of the doctor, a worker or soldier, he would have been killed on the spot.

He was pouring a lot more into you than just his words.

He was pouring images, stories and emotional states into me. He didn't know if they were real. I didn't know if they were real.

He made you into the deaf mute.

Right, he made me into the deaf mute. I couldn't talk about it. I wanted to but I had to put this story aside for many many years. I didn't think people could hear it.

Why not?

If human beings could tolerate this kind of raw truth, we would be a different race. The unconscious, the unknown is thundering in the universe and we people are numb. We have to hide a lot of things, and hide from a lot of things: rationalize them. We have to in order to survive.

Now is the fashion of traumas. Everybody talks of traumas, traumas. We've always known that there are traumas in our lives. Who doesn't know this,

who doesn't notice that one man finds this kind of solution, another finds that kind of solution. Life is full of traumas. Do we want to relive real traumas? No.

But is a story of a trauma necessarily a trauma? Or does it become something else when it is made into a story?

I really don't know what we actually relive and what we distort when we tell a story. Part of the truth is destroyed or distorted by our fear. A story creates a new truth. If the new truth makes sense to us, then it's not as terrible, as terrifying.

He survived physically because he had food. Even the doctor's shit contained material that fed him. Then of course there was the actual food that he had to eat. This was survival. The doctor kept him alive. He brought him medicine and whatever he thought he needed. They survived as a couple. Is that a miracle?

Now I look at myself. I am an old man. I survived thanks to my ability to make enough sense of Germany. I had a name, an official identity, so I survived it. If I wouldn't have survived, nobody would know this story.

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WRESTLING WITH MILK

The Lord had sworn to our fathers to give us
a land flowing with milk and honey.
Joshua, chapter 5:6

The doctor was suffocating in the Nazi system and used our man as a breathing apparatus for his survival. He sucked warmth and vitality out of the intimacy of their relationship. Certain that this simple man couldn't hear a word he said, the doctor told him the truth. He needed to talk to somebody. He was the kind of man that might have committed suicide because of his deep cynicism and lack of connection to any sort of meaning. He didn't believe in anything.

He struck out at the Nazi system by breaking rules to keep the man alive. Those who worked in the back of the gas chambers were gassed with strict

regularity. That was the rule. He mocked the system by fabricating his research. He was a lost boy kissing Hitler's ass to stay alive and receive some shard of fatherly approval in the form of a medal.

The doctor looked for something human. Not finding it he ended up causing pain, because pain he didn't feel. I am sure that this doctor didn't feel pain. He went to Hitler and Hitler gave him a medal. A medal is a dead thing.

The doctor lived in a temporary state of aliveness when he was with our man. He found a love, perhaps one we would call terrible, perverted or unacceptable, but nevertheless a love in a person he desperately needed and whose very life depended on him. His warm behind on the face of the guy aroused a sense of flesh and blood human contact between them. He gave him food, he gave him medicine, he gave him life. It is hard to grasp. He was a kind of beneficent ever present mother who simultaneously used him as a toilet and a love object. He chatted and rambled on about his research, described events around the camp and events that caused him to leave the camp. He talked to our guy like a boy telling stories perched on his mother's lap.

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How much is justified for survival? I was in Germany for a number of years and had to survive. I wouldn't have done everything. I would have run out. I believed I could leave at any time. To pay an unlimited price to survive, to give

up your senses, to give up talking, to give up hearing. I couldn't have survived like that. I survived by isolating myself with the things that I had to do. He was encased in a state of constantly holding himself back from talking, from feeling anything, from giving a hint that he hears.

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THE QUICKENING OF THE DEAD

Reader:
Who is like unto thee, Father of mercy, who in mercy rememberest thy creatures unto life? And faithful art thou to quicken the dead. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who quickenest the dead.
Congregation:
O look upon thy children that are appointed to death, who like sheep are gathered together on this Fast of the tenth day; though the doom of death lie upon thy flock, clear them, that they be not lost for ever...

From an English Yom Kippur Prayer Book

Some of his stories didn't make sense but they made sense. With every new discovery I had to rebuild his story in my head. He gave me bits and pieces and I had to build and rebuild the picture in my mind. For example, at first I couldn't get a clear picture when he said: *"You will stand the shoes, the shoes were standing... the brown shoes... the left and the right... and here were the black shoes."* For him the pairs of shoes were alive, they represented real people. I imagined he saw them not as empty shoes but as shoes filled and

bursting with living breathing people.

He would say: *"Shoes from the top down, brown shoes, black shoes..."* and he would move his hands up and down , up and down, as though he was an emcee introducing me to a grandstand of smiling friends. Sometimes he would move his hands in front of him and seemed to be imitating dead people walking. It's hard to describe. I'm not saying he perceived them as dead. I'm saying the opposite, he found a deep human contact with the dead, a man who has full contact with shoes.

Once in a while he mumbled names and reached for and found a pair of shoes that belonged to... I imagined someone he knew. I didn't care if it was true or not. I felt he was retrieving a sense of feeling human through his persevering creation and recreation of his memories. I felt in the presence of a living person as he talked and moved. I felt excited for him. Ah! Now he is conversing with someone, he is making contact with someone. And as he found the contact he was a little bit more alive. Now we still have to recognize there is difference between a ghost and real human contact. But what was once ghostly was transforming, albeit slowly. Each time I felt another surge of aliveness pass through him.

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One day he mentioned, *"...a bad smell, a smell of rotten eggs..."*. So, I

thought, aha, he has a sense of smell!

"...a bad smell... a smell of rotten eggs... how the two parts of the moon was the behind of the doctor sitting on his face. It was good... warm and good... and the doctor told him that this will give him nourishment that he doesn't have".

This was his first communication of a primary sensory experience: *"...the bad smell..."*. I felt a thrill. His original senses are coming alive! But after the hour I thought: Is it merely my wish for him to come alive because I can't tolerate that picture for a whole hour? I had to struggle to hear a person tell me about a man sitting on his face and defecating inside him. That's very terrible to perceive, but to make sense of him I had to do it, so I did it in that way.

He had described the situation with the doctor, which obviously had included smells and tastes, many times. But his recalling the smells made me feel an increased aliveness inside this ghost of a man. To feel him expressing a sense of a bad smell, he became more human. His story became saturated with sensation. This was the newest element.

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Things like that indicated he was changing. My picture of him, how and where he was living, became clearer. Little details and hints he dropped led me to believe that he rented a small room by himself somewhere in Chicago. At first he had lived on some form of public assistance and was in a job training or

rehabilitation program. They discovered he could do carpentry, was an excellent worker and could follow directions with extraordinary attention to detail. They got him a job installing and repairing furniture for a chain of restaurants.

He passed for a regular member of society but he really wasn't. For example, he couldn't drive or take vacations. He took buses or would call up the company and they would drive him. Work was his whole life, he was lost without it. In some ways he transferred his life and death dependency on the Nazi system to the company. Later on he transfered his dependency onto me.

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OG MELECH HABASHAN

For only Og, the King of Bashan- Og Melech Habashan-
...was left of the giants, the Rephaim.
Behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron.
Nine cubits was its length, and four cubits its breadth,
according to the common cubit.
Deuteronomy Chapter 3:11

He came in one day and abruptly started. I had never seen his face so distorted with emotion nor his movements sending out such a message of distress and urgency. Not looking at me, almost crying out, he began yelling louder and louder: *"BIG... BIG... BIG... BIG... "* followed by a short quick sentence that I understood immediately. He used a Jewish expression that you might not

be familiar with: *"Og melech habashan"*. In Yiddish it means somebody very big. Og melech habashan is a story from the Bible about a large king who fought with the Israelites. They were always at war with each other. Winning the war was seemingly very important, but neither side ever triumphed. The phrase is used in the Jewish tradition if you want to describe somebody very big and formidable. If I hadn't known that, I would never have understood. Many of his sounds and words I never deciferred.

I understood the meaning of his sentence to be that *"Some big guy came out"*. He always used the phrase *"they came out..."* like somebody walks out, that the people, the dead walked out. Then leaning his head slightly forward, as though carefully and purposefully thrusting his head into some dark pit of memory, he said: *"put his large hand... l a r g e... "* and when he said the word *"l a r g e"* he accentuated the word with a movement, as if gripping someone on the shoulder, *"...large hand on my shoulder. ...pulled me out and said"* the word I couldn't understand...I assumed it was the word for: "Go!" *"And I went... and I said: 'No more schmaga... '"*

There were two words, something like *"schmaga, or schmala."* I wasn't sure. It was very whispery. He used those words once before when he described how people walked to the gas chamber. They walked with their heads down. They looked at the shoes of the person in front of them. He described it as accompanied by a rhythmical droning sound, something like: *"schmaga, schmala, schmaga, schmala"*. Now whispering he said: *"No more schmaga....*

and I went... I went with him... his large hand on my shoulder. My eyes were closed... I went with him... to a place... and he threw me on the floor... and disappeared."

This whole event was conveyed to me, was spoken in a different voice, with a different sound, whispered almost hissed like steam escaping out of the first small fissure in a rusted and corroding pipe. And then I understood another piece of the whole story. It was when they walked on the line to the gas chamber. A Nazi put his hand on his shoulder, took him out from the line and put him in the back, in the back of the gas chamber, on a pile of clothing. I still didn't get the gist of when he said: *"no more schmala, no more schmaga."*

The week began with a disruption, an eruption of something new and terrifying. Just as some forest rangers can read the rings of a tree and tell you when there were storms, droughts or forest fires, this new ring clearly spoke of the deepest torment and grief of a man's heart.

Much later he told me that people knew they were going to the gas chamber. They talked about those that went before and disappeared. But now, during the hour, as he said *"No more schmala, no more schmaga... "*, I couldn't make sense of the words: *"schmala... schmaga....* schmala... schmaga... schmala... schmaga... " He said it prehistorically, rhythmically, like an ancient chant or a deep primitive rumbling underground that accompanied the walking of the shoes. When I figured it out, I didn't dare to confirm it with him. I just couldn't ask him to explain that. I realized that while they walked, they all said

the most sacred of Jewish prayers, this prayer you might know: the Schm'a Y'Israel. That is the sentence people say when they go to die or to some big event. It's spoken in a one or two seamless exhaled breaths, repeated over and over again deep into one's being down into the soles of one's shoes.

> **Schm'a Y'Israel Adonoy Aleuheynu, Adonoi E'Chad... Schm'a Y'Israel Adonoy Aleuheynu, Adonoi E'Chad... Schm'a Y'Israel Adonoy Aleuheynu, Adonoi E'Chad... Schm'a Y'Israel Adonoy Aleuheynu, Adonoi E'Chad... Schm'a Y'Israel Adonoy Aleuheynu, Adonoi E'Chad... Schm'a Y'Israel Adonoy Aleuheynu, Adonoi E'Chad...**

He heard it: *"schmaga... schmala... schmaga... schmala..."*

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Then he described the new environment with the soft clothing in great detail. When I say "describe", I make it sound sensible and logical but it wasn't. He reverted to half sentences, broke into several languages and uttered words and sounds I never made out. *"There were many soft clothings and... the place was all clothing and shoes and I had to..."* He never told me when he said *"I had to..."* that he got an order from somebody. *"How to put the shoes and how to take out the gold teeth and how to put the gold teeth in a special place and..."*

He didn't go in order, but I realized he was making connections, weaving his memories together, constructing a living fabric, tailoring his existence in a

mysterious and purposeful pattern. And as the weaver sends the shuttle cock through the same threads over and over again to make the cloth, he again repeated: *"Three came out..."* He described it as if he were the manager of three employees. *"Three were there... "*. Then he said: *"That wasn't the first time. Three came out..."* It was clear that they took them and he... he was alone. Here again was a sense of feeling, a sense of being. Only a living person feels alone. Then he raised his head and looked at me... with real fear.

He closed his eyes and stopped for a long time. I think he didn't say a word the remainder of the hour, as if that whole thing was too much. It was too much... the whole memory of the walk... and then the big guy who tells him *"GO!"* *"...and the three came out... and the three living people who were there..."* He started to connect it all... and he didn't talk. He left without raising his head, I would say in a state of shock. As he left I rushed to tell him: "See you on Thursday." He didn't say anything.

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As the threads of our weaving became stronger and the patterns more pronounced, he began shifting back and forth between the past and events in his daily life. He put things in order with full and clear sentences. He told me how the doctor said: *"You are the only one I can tell because you don't hear. You cannot talk so you cannot tell anybody."* Sometimes he talked about the stars

like a poet or a philosopher: *"the shining of the stars... the softness of the moon at night... and then I would fall asleep".*

Then came the next disruption, like the thundering rhythm of a full moon tide making its way up the shore with each pounding and luminous wave. *"Three came out..."* and as his feelings gathered up into an extreme state*: "Three were there..."* and then he looked at me. He held his hands folded together at his knees. He never moved them except when he described *"the BIG guy"* or *"his LARGE hand"* or *"how you put the shoes... the brown ones... and the black ones."* There was strong contact between us in those moments... and then he went back to his stories.

Now when he mentioned the disappearance of the three people I wanted to ask: "Is this your question?" but I was afraid. I was so worried he would disappear if I made one mistake. I didn't know which question would pass and which one might be fatal. In that minute when he looked up at me, past and present welded together into one terrifying moment of deadly fusion. It was the time of tell. He was afraid he would be taken. He just looked at me and dove back into his stories.

These moments were very meaningful to me. I felt like I was getting inside his whole system of feelings, his system of thinking. He raised his head more and more and sustained contact while we talked. I could feel him changing. I realized there was an order to his memory. Many times after an hour I didn't see the order. But now, looking back, the order is clearer.

I spent many hours watching him and listening to the same thing over and over again. What is different each time? How is he changing it? I could feel him moving forward and backward in time like a night watchman that checks a series of locks, gates and windows in a certain order. I could feel tension building up inside of him. I could almost predict the next disruption. I would say to myself: "Soon he will start." "*Three came out... three were there... "*

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Probably in our fifth or sixth year, he came in, sat down like a normal person, fully on the chair, not on the edge, face to face, and said: *"I am making tables"*. I thought: Is he retreating to the old times in the big factory? But he wasn't, he was looking directly at me, making full human contact. I realized his face was very expressive and real.

"I am making tables. I work there and learn there. They pay me a lot of money. I make tables and they tell me that I make the best tables of anyone there. I start at 8 in the morning and leave at 6."

"They give me a lot of money. I only work five days and I get two days free."

He described a normal way of living. I still followed my old system and avoided asking him direct questions. I merely repeated a few of his words. You make very good tables.

"Tables for a dining room where people eat!"

Then came what for him was a disaster. Full of fear, he showed up one day and said:

"I cannot come next Thursday. I have to work from the morning until late at night . We have to finish there in a week. I cannot come!"

Terror and fear riddled his small human frame. This was no ghost. Standing before me was a terrified man. He couldn't take it. He was shocked that he could not come. It was an interruption in his rigidly ordered system that seemed to have no solution. I paused... looked directly at him and said: "What day can you come?" *"I won't have to work on Friday."* So I said: "We will change our appointment to Friday."

As usual, he arrived on Friday exactly on time and began to talk about his work in detail. His life was now all about dining tables and assembling furniture. He talked for hours about how you cut formica, how you glue it, how you place it. He gave me a whole course in formica. I thought: I will become an expert on making tables.

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There were a lot of things he still couldn't do. He was a member of the union before he became a supervisor. When he became the supervisor they told him that a supervisor cannot be a member of the union. He was crying when he

told me this. It was the first time I ever saw tears. He was in a state of mental disintegration that his tie to the other workers would be cut. *"I don't want... I want to be a member of the union. I will be alone as supervisor. Alone... as supervisor."*

By this time I could talk to him plainly, like one person to another person.

"What is it that you are so worried about?"

"A member of the union is a member like all the other workers in this union. If I become a supervisor, Who takes care of me?"

The crucial difference was that now he could come to me and talk about it while then he had to fully rely on a mystical doctor. I say mystical because every time the three got taken away or the doctor appeared it was as if the random chewing of chaos spit him out for another round of existence. His mind didn't put it together that a supervisor is a higher position. It was a death sentence.

We spent the whole hour talking like brothers or friends, with me urging him to ask the company to talk to the union. Maybe they'd allow him to be a supervisor and stay a member of the union. Next hour he came in. He sat. He showed me his union card. They agreed to let him continue to be a member of the union. He was afraid. To be a supervisor was to be alone.

I became like his father and mother and everything. I learned so much from him, how split into pieces a person can become through years of being in the camp, what that experience can make of a seemingly very intelligent person. He began to put himself back together as he built contact with me.

Only at the end could he put his question into words, *"Do you understand why I came to you?"* I said: "I understand but do you understand?" *"Yes, I wanted you to tell me if I am alive. I simply couldn't make sure that I am alive... alive or dead. For years that I was there I didn't know who's dead and if I am alive, why did they keep me alive? I came to ask you the question but I also came with the hope that you will convince me that I am alive and not dead."*

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Here is a person who really teaches us just by *being,* or should I say, *being with* a sense of survival that's hard to imagine. To me it was hard to imagine.

He wasn't defiant or rebellious. He adapted. He was totally compliant.

He was totally compliant because he was constantly living in a state of random chance. Three great thinkers of the 20th Century, Boehm, Sheldrake and Prigogine[1], talked about it in physics: random chance and the basic rule.

The basic rule?

Darwin grappled with it: he cast survival in terms of the interplay between random chance and physical laws. Prigogine made his whole theory based on that, "chaos theory". When they asked: "What are physical laws?", they replied: "God given.", not that they are religious men but because they tried to get at it mathematically. Prigogine said you cannot use mathematics to measure how the human mind will react.

You're talking about the undefinable relationship between predictable structures and chaotic happenstance. Our guy lived in a state of chaos, he was hanging onto chance.

Yes, he lived on random chance. He had no control over the doctor.

He had no control over anything except how to place the shoes, how to put the teeth, place the bodies. We all instinctively try to minimize our sense of randomness.

We all have an illusion that we can go beyond that, that we have something else to hang onto. You see, I survived. I went back to my room with the Halutzim and felt, oh, I am invincible, I can always run out.

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[1]Boehm, Sheldrake and Prigogine are three great thinkers of the 20th Century whose ideas have greatly influenced the physical sciences, biological sciences, philosophy and psychoanalysis.

That was an illusion too.

That was an illusion. They could have me in less than five minutes. I had a special passport, a piece of paper, but when they attacked me they took the passport, first thing.

Your illusions helped you survive. Or did they?

Right, in little ways, endless little ways. Our guy survived in a special way that we are not familiar with.

I think we are familiar with it. We all shut down in little ways. People shut down pieces of themselves from regular living, not just an extreme situation like a concentration camp.

His was the extreme and because it was the extreme is what makes it a good story, because it's so unusual. His story brings you to the edge of intolerable chaos, to the edge of chaos and random chance. He lived primarily in random chance. He was terrified. Everyone around him either "came out", meaning came out "dead", or was "there". Therefore his phrases: "*they came out...* " and "*they were there...* ". If the doctor leaves him it's over!

You were more consistent.

I wasn't the same kind of chance as the doctor was. With me he knew it depends on him to come. He came. He started to create life within himself.

He was already looking for you before he met you.

He was looking, he maintained. If I want to give it an impossible explanation, he maintained some hope through the whole experience.

His life force. That's what missing in this. It's part of the physical laws and random chance but it's a third thing. There's physical laws, random chance and the life force.

The life force, for all psychotherapists, is very important. Very important to realize there is a life force although we will say: God given. Sheldrake asked me: "What makes the seed of an apple tree grow into an apple tree and why doesn't it make a mouse?"

There could be five apple seeds and only one will become a tree.

Or it might be that a mouse comes along and eats them all for food and they do become the mouse. The seed of the apple tree grows in the form of the mouse but we just don't see it. Then the apple tree is in the unconscious of the mouse.

Whoa... ! I'll have to think about that.

We don't know how to explain all the elements that come together. We don't know how to explain chance because if the apple seed is eaten by the mouse it's in the mouse.

So the doctor nourished our guy, our guy nourished the doctor. Our guy nourished you, you nourished our guy.

He nourished me by stimulating my thinking and my searching and my fear and my worry.

And by pulling you more into random chance.

Why did I want him to come so much? I wondered "Is it possible to build contact with somebody that appears to have no contact?"

You needed him. Another way to look at it is that you're a teacher and

he had a question.

That too.

Because the pupil nourishes the teacher and the teacher nourishes the pupil.

Lucky he didn't know psychoanalysis. He didn't look to make sense of his situation, he came upon a way to survive, but not consciously.

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It was around this time that he showed up with the first card. He never handed it to me directly, but placed it on the desk and went back to sit in his chair. I went over and looked at it. It was his membership card for the airport Carpenters Union and there was his picture. ***"It's me!"*** he said, as though to say: ***"Can you believe that it's me!"*** I thought: I will be ending with him soon.

We mostly talked about his present work, hourly employees, salaried employees, and medical benefits. Once in a while I asked him little questions about the past, but I realized that his time in the concentration camp was now in the background, like the ***"working in the big factory".*** He remembered it only dimly.

We later got to talking about how he got out. ***"I didn't go out. The American Army took me out."*** He was terrified when, ***"The Americans were there."*** He had to be taken out. He never would have left on his own.

He existed in an ingenious state of equilibrium between being alive and deadness. He created a homeostatic system that made sense in that environment, that he can be dead to speech, hearing and sensation and a pair of

shoes can be a living breathing person. How can we, who have never lived in a state in which a pair of shoes equals a living human being, say it isn't so. If it sounds mystical, it is mystical. If it sounds psychotic, maybe it is psychotic. Who knows better? Who knows at all?

If he saw a black shoe and a brown shoe, he had to make order like a mother who sees a child with two different shoes. He leaps through the moment to where he puts life in order. He created a life situation in accordance with his ability to be alive.

He didn't know what was real and what was not. He didn't know what was dead and what was alive. That's why he came to me. He needed to talk to somebody who could help him separate out what was real and what was not real. He needed someone who knew languages because he needed someone who could understand his loss of language. He needed to release the millions of sound and word images compressed inside the perimeter of deadness surrounding his brain. And of course he needed the answer to his question.

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THE QUESTION

I told this story to a good friend once.

"So did you tell him? Did you tell him the answer to his question?" my friend asked impatiently.

"You mean did I tell him why he stayed alive while all the others who worked with him were put to death? No, because he

should forget it."

He gave me really one more surprise before I realized we were nearing the end. He came in puffed up like a weight lifter and waving his arms as loud words flew out of his mouth. He really was like the powerful tall man of his original story. He shoved something that looked like a credit card in my hand.

It was an pass that allowed him to fly on almost any airline for free. He maintained the furniture for a chain of airport restaurants. After he became a supervisor, they gave him a free ticket on all the airlines. The ticket had his picture on it and again he became animated, so alive: *"Look who I am!"* He became really BIG! He pointed and said: *"Look... that's me!"*

And it was really the last part, the end part, the final perimeter of our journey. When he came in and showed me two times: *"That's me!",* I felt he could go. Good for you! You don't need me anymore. I suggested: "You know... you're now functioning well... you make a lot... " The end part was so satisfying it caused me to forget a lot of the boring hours, boring and frightening hours, the description of the back of that... the back that he described with so much detail... with such rigid order.

By now I had a clear picture that he came home from work, was tired, had something to eat and went to sleep. He had a watch on his hand, surely had an alarm clock. The work became his life, he put life into those tables. I didn't diagnose him or give his experience a name and I don't suggest you try. He

wasn't restored to full life. I didn't try. There are limits to our ability to help people change.

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THE GEOLOGY OF MEMORY

Our guy's story evokes complicated questions about memory. He had to forget some things in order to survive. Fear can create a pressure that shifts things in the human mind. He forgot but there was an order in his forgetting. He was able to cut things out and come back to them later. I'm glad I didn't ask him many questions. He had his own system of rebuilding his memory. He did it through me but the order had to come from him.

I learned a lot about memory at the Mary Lawrence Day Treatment Center I created in Chicago. After I broke with Bettelheim, I decided it was absolutely necessary to treat the parents as well as the children. A very competent but rigid and successful engineer came to our fathers' group. He was responsible for worker safety at a very large manufacturing plant. He designed systems and protocols to protect the workers, but he couldn't keep his autistic boy from running away and slipping through the fence to wave at the trains as they went by. The boy was a very smart little guy. He talked to me in broken language like our guy from the camp: *"There's a big hole... I go out at night... trains go by..."*.

The father struggled at the fathers' meeting. He couldn't express his fear that the boy would be hurt. He complained it was too difficult to talk because I didn't give them a subject. He could only participate by lecturing the other fathers about: *"the importance and difficulties of maintaining safety standards for the individual person in relation to machinery"*. He bored the other fathers.

One day, abruptly, he stopped lecturing, grabbed his coat, ran out of the meeting without an explanation and disappeared.

Next morning he came back with his boy. This was very unusual because the boy's mother usually brought him in. *"I have to rush to work, Dr. Yahalom. Can we talk this evening? I need to tell you why I ran out but it's a long story. Can I see you when I come back from work? It's urgent for me to tell you!"* I agreed.

When he returned he described how he designed the yard with a special fence for his boy. He had a persistent thought in his mind that there was a hole in the fence, but he'd never seen a hole. He'd been worried about it for weeks but he couldn't remember where it was. In the middle of the meeting he remembered, knew exactly where it was and went home to repair it. *"It's a miracle that my boy is alive. He always wandered out in the yard during the night... it's a miracle that he knew to come back... and not to step on the tracks when a train was coming. He was a boy who would have easily done that. Then I had to run out of the meeting. I don't understand how I could have... it's months that I knew about that hole."*

We talked. I suggested that when we forget a frightening thought, sometimes it indicates that the memory has a very different second meaning, an associative or symbolic meaning that's hidden. Then one of the two meanings often disappears from our memory. I encouraged him to talk it over with his therapist, but the therapist's conclusion irritated me.

The therapist announced proudly: *"The father has a death wish against the child."* I thought: I won't tell the father that! That could be partially true but that's not even close to a decent explanation. The father contradicts himself. He says, *"I had a thought in my mind that there's a hole in the fence... but I've never seen the hole."*

Is this a memory or his imagination?

"It's months that I knew about that hole... but I can't remember where it is."

The father says he both remembers and he doesn't remember. If he remembered then why didn't he fix it? He's such a responsible, structured, rigid person. I can't ask him because he doesn't know.

If he has it in his mind he's aware of it. But he claims that he has forgotten. How do we select what we forget? Are there layers of forgetting that we can only tune into with the proper stimulation or cue? Why would we forget important things?

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He's saying he doesn't remember it. He's both aware of it and he's not aware of it.

I struggled with this. I had all of Freud's theories and present day theories. I had speculations that ended up with nothing at all. Memory does not lend itself to speculation. We have a lot of memories and experiences that don't reach the brain. An engineer remembered what happened on his body a million years ago but he can't bring it to his mind. When we trace the journey of a memory through time and through all the events and emotions and thoughts it comes to be associated with, we can't do it because every memory pulls us into the whole history of man and the universe through the body. Every time we track a memory we can't go back a thousand years ago, five thousand years ago. It's too unwieldy.

All stories, books, movies, legends, ballads etc. feed on memories. Any good story goes prowling around inside your mind looking for a good feast. And your memories either eagerly come out from hiding and join the banquet or stubbornly refuse the invitation. A good story reaches inside of you to varying levels, grabs at your memories and hunts them down. Then it sinks its teeth into your deep unconscious, takes a bite and leaves a scent. But what you're saying is that any memory can be your ticket to the infinite.

Right.

Any memory.

Any memory... and as such it is nothing or...

It is everything.

It is everything.

But getting back to the engineer, you tell him: "'...when we lose the ability to remember a thought that's very frightening, sometimes that indicates that the memory has a very different meaning.' "

Oh that was me imitating all my psychoanalytic theories.

Okay... if you say so, but then you go on: "Then one of the two meanings often disappears from our memory".

I am saying that he has forgotten something.

But not necessarily the location of the hole. The hole in the fence contains something. Something much larger is compressed or condensed and hiding in that hole.

YES SOMETHING THAT'S MUCH LARGER. Not his wish for the boy to die. That's there too but that's not a major factor.

Okay... so we have this BIG successful engineer... he handles BIG security...

You're leading us back to the BIG guy...

Yes... another BIG guy... and another BIG factory... but ... there's something missing. Just like with our guy, it's not the real story. There's another story that we can't remember. We know its there but we can't find it.

There's a hole ... and what goes through the hole? The boy who loves the train; that's an old image: a boy who loves a train and we don't have to get into maybe little girls love trains too... just that a child loves a train. So what the hole contains is what's missing, what's missing in him, what he can't remember in himself: it's a more spontaneous, adventurous side of him.

That's right but also the pleasure of the child.

...and the playfulness of the child

Right.

That's the missing piece.

That's the core: play. He is too structured and too safe. He doesn't play.

So what's missing relates to death but it's not really the death wish for the boy, it's the dead part of the engineer.

The dead part of him. It never becomes a part of him.

What we're saying now is so much deeper and more meaningful that "he has a death wish for the boy".

But you see if you present a paper at an institute, and I am now putting it down even though I can't really suggest a better way: if you say he had a death wish for the boy everybody will go "Ooooo....."

But what they won't feel is the memory of their own... the hole in their own fence. Now fence is a condensation of all.... the fence! de-fence... defense.

Yes now we have it. The fence is the defense.

And the train is movement... excitement... life.

You see now you have it.

But with every defense there's a regret. Something gets left behind, forgotten on the other side. So sometimes we leave a hole and in that hole we deposit a small piece of hope that one day we will retrieve what we have forgotten.

I'll tell you what I've forgotten. When the Gauleiter informed me that he had received the orders to eliminate me, I can't remember which border I passed through into Switzerland when I had to run out. It must have been a well enough known border because it was all arranged. Why would I forget the place that rescued my life. There are thousands of things, but not thousands of borders.

So what is the forgotten meaning in your escape over the Swiss border? What did you leave behind that you are now reclaiming for yourself. What dead part of you seeks to become alive again?

PART 4

Los Angeles, 1999

falling leaves

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

March 14, 1999

Your probably shocked that I'm calling you so early on a Sunday morning. A miracle happened, a psychoanalytic miracle! I had a nightmare last night. After I woke up from the nightmare I struggled to understand it. I looked into all kinds of meanings then abruptly the whole picture of my leaving Germany, the train station, the train ride, the border crossing, arriving at the British Consulate and further even, details that I've never remembered! I am so... I am beyond excited! I don't know if you will be as ecstatic(overjoyed)(thrilled) as I am. I have tried to remember this for over 60 years, and now it's come back to me, the whole thing.

Why it came through that nightmare is a fascinating question. I was feeling very depressed, very deprived, very disappointed by something that happened yesterday. Some friends hurt me deeply. Something I created was taken away from me. I won't tell you all the details, they're really unimportant. I really didn't think what happened had left such a deep impression on me.

I remembered the whole thing. I thought to myself, I want to share this unusual psychic event with you. It's a form of a miracle.

You know just Friday I mentioned to you that I didn't remember? I get stuck. There's always a piece missing.

Remembering those events is exciting but also terribly frightening! It was unbelievable. I remember an image of the German soldier who checked my passport. Where his face would have been, was nothing at all, like that of a dead person. I felt deadly frightened.

CROSSING THE BORDER

Germany, 1937

I've always remembered the young man who knocked at my door. He was dressed in regular clothing, not a uniform.

"A Nazi officer is waiting for you outside." I went out and was motioned into a car. It was the Gauleiter.

"I am keeping my promise, Itamar. I'm supposed to kill you. Get on the first train to Switzerland this afternoon. Tomorrow I will send three or four people to take you away. I have kept my promise. Go!"

My girlfriend had tears in her eyes when I told her.

"That's the only way Itamar. You have to go by yourself. You know as soon as I'm assigned to a Kibbutz, I'll be leaving as well. If you make it across, I'll see you there."

I gathered my things. From there on my recollections form a string of both disconnected and connected images. I remember I left with a girl from the Bech Hahalutz, the group I lived with. I gave her the money to buy me a ticket for a reserved seat. When she returned from the ticket window, it wasn't her. There was a new girl who was dressed in the uniform of the Nazi Youth. She checked that I had my passport, took both my hands into hers, squeezed them hard and handed me the ticket. I gave her a kiss and said goodbye. She disappeared.

I didn't have time to think, is this real or a hallucination? She disappeared but I had a real ticket in my real hand to the right place.

Did I change my perception of her or was she a different person? I chose to believe she was a different person. I thought of Bacchus, my driver, and his beautiful organization which always gave me a sense of security, always appearing when I needed them. To think of Bacchus helped me, to believe in the miracle that somebody would appear.

I entered the train at the last moment and found my seat. You see I wasn't in a state of reality because reality wouldn't rescue me. Everything was speeding and everything was flowing into a blurred melting down dream-like state. Suddenly I was seated on the Schnellzug and we were picking up speed. We were leaving Frankfurt heading towards Switzerland.

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The probability of actuality is 100%. Cormac McCarthy

So the proof that it makes sense is that it did happen,
but you don't know if it did happen. Itamar Yahalom

I have no idea how long it took to get from Frankfurt to the border at Basel. What happened next is what I remembered in my dream. People were moving about the train and freshening themselves for our arrival. You could feel we were approaching the border. A Nazi Patrol Officer entered our car, moved down the aisle and demanded to see my papers. I looked down as I handed him my ticket

and my special passport, trying not to make one extra move or breath, trying to disturb the air as little as possible as if I could evaporate between its molecules like some formless vapor. Something compelled me to look up.

When I did, I couldn't see the Nazi's face. The grey bottomless oval of a death mask stared back at me, sucking me in, greedy and unforgiving. The words "Ja Wohl!" shot out at me the same moment he clicked his boots and went on to the next passenger.

All the commotion of the world stopped. My heart stopped. My breath stopped. There was no sound, no vibration, only the faint image of a pink round surface that slowly took the shape of the face of the Swiss train conductor welcoming me to Basel with a huge red cheeked smile and extended hand. I was in Switzerland.

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I couldn't believe I was out. I walked down off the train into the noise of the station. It was already late at night. I looked for a restaurant and sat there eating a good meal surrounded by people who were laughing and smiling. I couldn't nor did I want to sleep. I walked the streets all night as if I needed the repeated impact of my shoes on the pavement to prove I was indeed alive. As the town woke up with the first signs of morning, I asked directions to the British Consulate.

I showed my passport at the gate and went right in. The door man was unusually friendly as though they were expecting me. I was offered some food and coffee and given a place to sit down. *"Someone will be right with you."* After about twenty minutes a woman sat down and showed me a stack of papers.

"Here is your new passport, your train tickets to Italy, your boat tickets from Italy to Haifa, and you'll need some different currencies for your incidental traveling expenses." Everything was in perfect order.

"Don't I have to pay you for all of this?"

"Oh no..." she laughed. *"We are happy to arrange all of this for you. We are astonished but unbelievably delighted that you came out alive."*

She provided me with a handsome rucksack for my things, and carefully, as though she were tucking a sleepy young child into bed, put all my papers in order and placed them in the front pocket of the bag. Still in a dream like state, I didn't know if the rucksack and tickets were real or a hallucinatory wish.

I didn't stay in Switzerland very long and there is still a giant gap where there should be memories of traveling to Italy on the train. But once I was aboard the boat, I traveled first class, I began to feel real. The sea was comforting and refreshing. The light touch of the wind on my skin, the intoxicating smell of sea air, the incessant rocking of the boat, the raucous explosive noise of sea birds; these sensations brought me back to life.

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When I returned to Palestine, I looked up one of my sisters. I isolated myself for several days and only made small excursions here and there. One by one, I looked up my other sisters and brothers and I told them I had been in Germany but little else. Palestine was a busy and rapidly changing place in 1937. Immigrants were pouring in from all over Europe. Hatred and skirmishes between the Haganah and the British were intensifying.

I decided to travel to one of the outlying Kibbutzim to look up one of the ten men I knew was in Germany with me. No one knew anything about him.

Don't the members of this Kibbutz wonder what happened to one of its best members?

"Lots of young people come and go from here. They're always moving around and don't always tell us where they're going. We don't ask questions. A lot of things remain unexplained."

No one knew he went to Germany. No one knew if he came out. I have to admit only one person knew I had gone. If I wouldn't have come back my girlfriend would have said: *"Itamar went away on business with the Haganah. We don't know where he is."*

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A German psychiatrist approached me at a conference in 1998. I was being

honored and told a little bit of my history. He came up to me hesitantly and asked: *"Itamar, how did you survive?"* I said, "I have only one answer to a person like yourself who is so uncomfortable and curious asking me such a question. I don't know how. I am like a cat who lives seven, eight or nine lives. My only proof is that I am here. I am alive. If I wasn't I couldn't tell you this story."

But that answer didn't satisfy the one question that still lingered inside of me. If you take a lot of accidents and put them all together and then realize they really happened to you, you may still ask, was that really me? Even if you show me this book and I read it, I will still ask, was that me?

There are so many gaps in our experience, holes in the fence. I didn't remember the trip from Frankfurt to Basel for over sixty years. Then, stimulated by one more disappointment, one more painful loss, I had a dream and it all came back to me. There are so many things we forget in our lives.

Now I'm not a religious person. You can say they were miracles, or you can say they were not. But if you do then I say to you: What about the other nine men? Where were their miracles? Isn't the history of every human being filled with all kinds of things we cannot explain.

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FROM THE MIDRASH

God created the world many times because it was never exactly what He wanted it to be. He tried again and again and each time it always ended in disaster. After the twenty-seventh time He gave up. He just couldn't take it anymore so He just let it be. He said, "It's no use, so We'll just let it be. All We can do is hope for the best. Let's hope it works."

And then He rested.

Dr. Itamar Yahalom died on August 2, 2001. I wrote this postscript the eve of his death based on his stories and the many dialogues and emails we exchanged. It is more personal than Itamar might have revealed in a conversation with anyone except his wife. However, as his collaborator I feel it is my task to express the many things Itamar communicated as well as many of the things he could not communicate.

Joellen Lapidus

POSTSCRIPT

August 2, 2001

I don't quite know what happened. I was at home enjoying my life with the usual and unusual aches and pains of being 87. I have always loved my house and enjoyed every minute I lived there. I loved sitting at the table with my coffee and friends. Anne took such good care of me and I probably didn't express my appreciation enough but that is my psychic system.

My garden is visible on my right with its cactus flowers, tomatoes, cats and racoons. They come and steal eat out of the cat's bowls which sit on top of the jacuzzi cover next to their bed for the colder California nights. The mother racoon comes with her babies. I suppose our jacuzzi cover has become the Racoon Institute for learning how to make meaningful contact with people.

But it was just two weeks ago, maybe three. It began with a stomach ache. We thought it was some kind of stomach flu. We all said, "You know how it takes old people longer to recover from such things." The doctor said my blood was too thin so he increased my dosage of diuretics. I had a terrible reaction. I felt my insides were exploding. Then came the pain. They took me to the hospital on Monday. I was in tremendous pain. The morphine helped but I still went in and out the most intense physical agony I have ever known. The morphine blurred the pain but separated me from Anne and all the people I love and this world and life that I love with the deepest and most sacred of ambivalences, this world of good people and rotten people and good and rotten people.

In the blur I questioned my grip on life. What do I mean by that? Once when an electrician was at the house fixing some electrical problems I tripped over his wires as I came walking out of the bathroom. Anne and the electrician both looked up to the sound of me falling, helpless to move fast enough to grab me. They both say everything went into slow motion. I began to fall backwards, reaching out in front of me tightly grabbing some invisible bar or banister with both hands and righted myself. Then we all returned to regular time and there I was. I had not fallen.

But in the blur I did not grab the bar. In fact there was no bar and time did not slow for me to reach pause and grab. Suddenly it was over. The determination I had to muster to survive, even from the womb, had simply evaporated like mist rising from an early morning lake. The deep disappointments and losses of my life became spread out over an infinite number of moments of time and diminished. I was leaving using the special exit visa we all carry with us. I was no longer hovering over infinity, seeking limits and insights, I was infinity itself. I no longer contemplated the eternal I was the eternal. Just like that.

If I return I will not remember this life although we may meet again and will share a familiarity that seems strange and unusual. We will experience a deep connection and feel something that defies our words and concepts. But we will not remember.